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ASLAUGA'S
KNIGHT

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THE CAXTON SERIES

UNDINE AND ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT

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UNDINE & ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT

BY

LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO UNDINE

From the Final Edition Fouqué's Works

An edition of the last hand! It is a serious, weighty word for an author who, not accustomed to trifle with time and eternity, earnestly weighs and considers what needs to be weighed and considered.

And — God be praised! — this has been the manner of him who now addresses the reading world, for many years. It is, indeed, not exactly a parting salutation to the reading world that he hereby contemplates. There are still many arrows in his quiver, some ready forged, some in process of forging, some only thought of, but all without poison, which he purposes to send forth when the fit time shall come, or, perhaps, his survivors may do this when his own last hour shall have passed, and all time for him have vanished. However this may be, the present task assumes the character of a bequest, in relation to that which he has already sent into the world,—and bequests are matters of a sufficiently serious nature.

These fictions belonged, at one time, to my very self—yea, as I may well say, they were myself—and now I resign them once more to the world, and, after this last review, for ever. I have made scarcely any alteration in them, for, even as they are, they have gained the approbation of the reading world; and, therefore, I repelled that critical fury which sometimes assailed me in my labours, remembering how thereby many a gifted master has injured rather than improved his compositions, while the reader searches with painful anxiety after the earlier features of the much-loved work, and, alas, too often in vain! What I deemed indispensably to need reforming were chiefly errors arising from former ignorance either in respect of the old northern manners or names, or similar matters, of which one previously unversed in such studies could scarcely be aware. So that now I venture, with full confidence, to say to the reader, "Receive, renewed, what has delighted you;—what has already been dear to you for many years." Conscious, however, of the obligation to render some account of the origin and foundation of these various works, I offer to the reading world, and especially to fellow-artists, the following communication:—

UNDINE

How this darling gift of my muse first arose (1807), from the mystical laboratory of the aged,

whimsical Theophrastus Paracelsus [Treatise of Elemental Spirits], has already been alluded to: here, however, the particulars shall be given more at length. It was not so easy, out of the deeply mysterious natural philosopher, sometimes seized with ostentation, and even charlatanery, as also contentious pride, but at the same time penetrated and enlightened by ever valid presentiments, and rich in an undeniably genuine experience, in any degree to make anything, as the saying is. All the less easy was it, inasmuch as his oracles are delivered in a mixture of kitchen, or at best monkish, Latin and indolent provincial dialect, similar to the present Tyrolese, so that the like in literature can scarcely anywhere else be found. Very few treatises, and not exactly the most interesting, are composed throughout in Latin; and yet, perhaps, there is no one quite free from the occurrence, as it were by accident, of German phrases. It resembles the communication of an adventurer, far-travelled in foreign lands, who yet could never quite forget his mother-tongue, and now throws all together in confused variety, as it may chance to fall. Something of this sort I have been told of a French sailor, and numberless times has the old Theophrastus Paracelsus Bombastus ab Hohenheim (for thus stands his full title) reminded me of it. I, notwithstanding, ceased not to study an old edition of my speech-monger, which fell to me at an auction;—and that carefully. Even his

receipts I read through in their order, just as they had been showered into the text, still continuing in the firm expectation, that from every line something wonderfully magical might float up to me and strike the understanding. Single sparks, here and there darting up, confirmed my hopes, and drew me still deeper into the mines beneath. Somewhat thereto might have been contributed by the symbolic figures, very skilfully impressed upon the leathern covers of the ten or twelve quarto volumes, as also by the, to me unintelligible, gold letters here and there dispersed among them, and the wood-cut (inserted as a title-page) of the wonderful master, representing him in an antiquated jacket; his features strongly marked, almost inclined to wrath, yet bearing a true-hearted mildness; his head already grey and bald, but with one lock, almost Apollonian, over the forehead; both his nerved hands folded together and resting on a knight's two-handed sword.

> "Now, ancient master, thanks to thee,
> A valiant course thou leddest me,"—

for, as a pearl of soft radiance, that may be compared to a mild tear of melancholy, there at last sparkled towards me, from out its rough-edged shell-work—"UNDINE!"

My reflection of the image succeeded all the better, and more naturally, as the hoary magician treated with the most unshaken conviction, one is

almost induced to say faith, of the indisputable reality of his elemental spirits; not only of the undines or undenes, as he expresses it, but also of sylphs, or spirits of the air; salamanders, or spirits of the fire; gnomes, or spirits of the earth. Founded upon such ideas, the author, at a later period, called some other tales into light, and, as he may well say, not without success. But the words of his old master, A. W. Schlegel, spoken for a very different occasion, will yet here apply: "Undine remains the first love, and this is felt only once!"

In those times of gloomy events for the poet's fatherland, wherein it sprang from out his spirit, not untinged, as it well might be, with many of his own peculiar sufferings, it assumed a hue of deep melancholy, which yet its subject might have also called forth amid the sunshine of brighter days. The eyes of a water-maiden must, according to her nature, beam bright with tears, although sometimes the wanton sports of aquatic nymphs, like luxuriant loop-plants on the banks of a rivulet, may juggle around the lovely child. Thus might the bleeding heart of the poet, with the pelican's faculty, have poured somewhat into his fiction, and so gained for it that abundant sympathy which it so heartily met with, both in and out of the German land.

And now, my darling child, go forth on thy renewed appearance, accompanied by the gracious

salutation of our exalted master Goethe, on sending thee back to a noble lady, after having replaced the worn-out binding of a library-copy by a new one :—

> " Here one may see how men are fabricated
> Of passion only—conscience have they none ;
> How ill have they the beauteous child entreated—
> Its dress almost from off its body gone !
> In later time, howe'er, this luck befell me—
> The pious youth will envy me, I trow ;
> You gave me, friend, the opportunity
> To clothe the lovely prize from top to toe."

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TO UNDINE

UNDINE! thou fair and lovely sprite,
  Since first from out an ancient lay
I saw gleam forth thy fitful light,
  How hast thou sung my cares away!

How hast thou nestled next my heart,
And gently offered to impart
  Thy sorrows to my listening ear,
Like a half-shy, half-trusting child,
The while my lute, in wood-notes wild,
  Thine accents echoed far and near!

Then many a youth I won to muse
  With love on thy mysterious ways,
And many a fair one to peruse
  The legend of thy wondrous days.

And now both dame and youth would fain
List to my tale yet once again;
  Nay, sweet Undine, be not afraid!
Enter their halls with footstep light,
Greet courteously each noble knight,
  But fondly every German maid.

And should they ask concerning me,
  Oh, say, "He is a cavalier,
Who truly serves and valiantly,
In tournay and festivity,
  With lute and sword, each lady fair!"

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UNDINE

On a beautiful evening, many hundred years ago, a worthy old fisherman sat mending his nets. The spot where he dwelt was exceedingly picturesque. The green turf on which he had built his cottage ran far out into a great lake; and this slip of verdure appeared to stretch into it as much through love of its clear waters as the lake, moved by a like impulse, strove to fold the meadow, with its waving grass and flowers, and the cooling shade of the trees, in its embrace of love. They seemed to be drawn toward each other, and the one to be visiting the other as a guest.

With respect to human beings, indeed, in this pleasant spot, excepting the fisherman and his family, there were few, or rather none, to be met with. For as in the background of the scene, toward the west and north-west, lay a forest of extraordinary wildness, which, owing to its sunless gloom and almost impassable recesses, as well as to fear of the strange creatures and visionary illusions to be encountered in it, most people avoided entering, unless in cases of extreme neces-

sity. The pious old fisherman, however, many times passed through it without harm, when he carried the fine fish which he caught by his beautiful strip of land to a great city lying only a short distance beyond the forest.

Now the reason he was able to go through this wood with so much ease may have been chiefly this, because he entertained scarcely any thoughts but such as were of a religious nature; and besides, every time he crossed the evil-reported shades, he used to sing some holy song with a clear voice and from a sincere heart.

Well, while he sat by his nets this evening, neither fearing nor devising evil, a sudden terror seized him, as he heard a rushing in the darkness of the wood, that resembled the trampling of a mounted steed, and the noise continued every instant drawing nearer and nearer to his little territory.

What he had fancied, when abroad in many a stormy night, respecting the mysteries of the forest, now flashed through his mind in a moment, especially the figure of a man of gigantic stature and snow-white appearance, who kept nodding his head in a portentous manner. And when he raised his eyes towards the wood, the form came before him in perfect distinctness, as he saw the nodding man burst forth from the mazy web-work of leaves and branches. But he immediately felt emboldened, when he reflected that nothing to give him alarm had ever befallen him even in the forest;

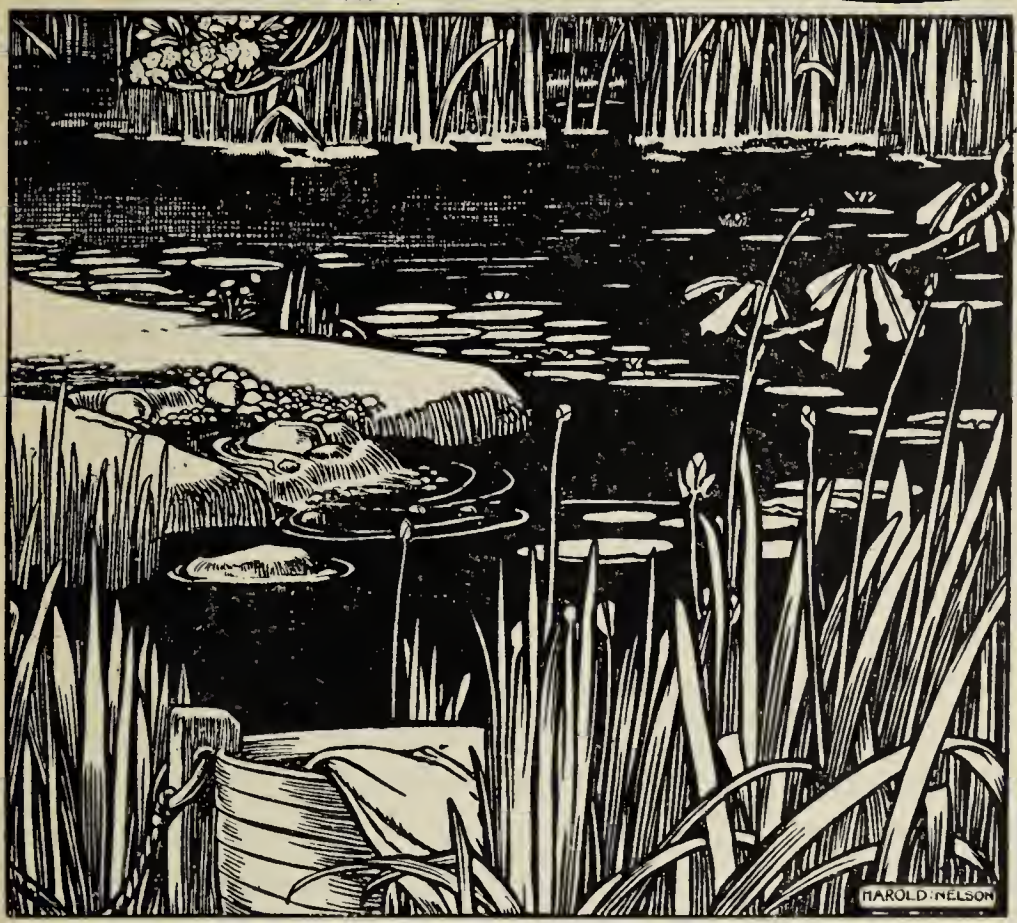
and moreover, that on this open neck of land the evil spirit, it was likely, would be still less daring in the exercise of his power. At the same time he prayed aloud with the most earnest sincerity of devotion, repeating a passage of the Bible. This inspired him with fresh courage, and soon perceiving the illusion, and the strange mistake into which his imagination had betrayed him, he could with difficulty refrain from laughing. The white nodding figure he had seen became transformed, in the twinkling of an eye, to what in reality it was, a small brook, long and familiarly known to him, which ran foaming from the forest, and discharged itself into the lake.

But what had caused the startling sound was a knight arrayed in sumptuous apparel, who from under the shadows of the trees came riding toward the cottage. His doublet was violet embroidered with gold, and his scarlet cloak hung gracefully over it; on his cap of burnished gold waved red and violet-coloured plumes; and in his golden shoulder-belt flashed a sword, richly ornamented and extremely beautiful. The white barb that bore the knight was more slenderly built than war-horses usually are, and he touched the turf with a step so light and elastic that the green and flowery carpet seemed hardly to receive the slightest injury from his tread. The old fisherman, notwithstanding, did not feel perfectly secure in his mind, although he was forced to believe that no evil could be

The Old Fisherman perceives

feared from an appearance so pleasing, and therefore, as good manners dictated, he took off his hat on the knight's coming near, and quietly remained by the side of his nets.

When the stranger stopped, and asked whether he with his horse could have shelter and entertainment there for the night, the fisherman returned answer: "As to your horse, fair sir, I have no better stable for him than this shady



The Knight

meadow, and no better provender than the grass that is growing here. But with respect to yourself, you shall be welcome to our humble cottage, and to the best supper and lodging we are able to give you."

The knight was well contented with this reception; and alighting from his horse, which his host assisted him to relieve

from saddle and bridle, he let him hasten away to the fresh pasture, and thus spoke: "Even had I found you less hospitable and kindly disposed, my worthy old friend, you would still, I suspect, hardly have got rid of me to-day; for here, I perceive, a broad lake lies before us, and as to riding back into that wood of wonders, with the shades of evening deepening around me, may Heaven in its grace preserve me from the thought."

"Pray, not a word of the wood, or of returning into it!" said the fisherman, and took his guest into the cottage.

There beside the hearth, from which a frugal fire was diffusing its light through the clean, dusk room, sat the fisherman's aged wife in a great chair. At the entrance of their noble guest, she rose and gave him a courteous welcome, but sat down again in her seat of honour, not making the slightest offer of it to the stranger. Upon this the fisherman said with a smile:

"You must not be offended with her, young gentleman, because she has not given up to you the best chair in the house; it is a custom among poor people to look upon this as the privilege of the aged."

"Why, husband!" cried the old lady, with a quiet smile, "where can your wits be wandering? Our guest, to say the least of him, must belong to a Christian country; and how is it possible, then, that so well-bred a young man as he appears to

be could dream of driving old people from their chairs? Take a seat, my young master," continued she, turning to the knight; "there is still quite a snug little chair on the other side of the room there, only be careful not to shove it about too roughly, for one of its legs, I fear, is none of the firmest."

The knight brought up the seat as carefully as she could desire, sat down upon it good-humouredly, and it seemed to him almost as if he must be somehow related to this little household, and have just returned home from abroad.

These three worthy people now began to converse in the most friendly and familiar manner. In relation to the forest, indeed, concerning which the knight occasionally made some inquiries, the old man chose to know and say but little; he was of opinion that slightly touching upon it, at this hour of twilight, was most suitable and safe; but of the cares and comforts of their home, and their business abroad, the aged couple spoke more freely and listened also with eager curiosity as the knight recounted to them his travels, and how he had a castle near one of the sources of the Danube, and that his name was Sir Huldbrand of Ringstetten.

Already had the stranger, while they were in the midst of their talk, heard at times a splash against the little low window, as if someone were dashing water against it. The old man, every time he heard the noise, knit his brows with vexation; but

at last, when the whole sweep of a shower came pouring like a torrent against the panes, and bubbling through the decayed frame into the room, he started up indignant, rushed to the window, and cried with a threatening voice—

"Undine! will you never leave off these fooleries? — not even to-day, when we have a stranger-knight with us in the cottage?"

All without now became still, only a low laugh was just audible, and the fisherman said, as he came back to his seat, "You will have the goodness, my honoured guest, to pardon this freak, and it may be a multitude more; but she has no thought of evil, or of any harm. This mischievous Undine, to confess the truth, is our adopted daughter, and she stoutly refuses to give over this frolicsome childishness of hers, although she has already entered her eighteenth year. But in spite of this, as I said before, she is at heart one of the very best children in the world."

"*You* may say so," broke in the old lady, shaking her head; "you can give a better account of her than I can. When you return home from fishing, or from selling your fish in the city, you may think her frolics very delightful. But to have her dancing about you the whole day long, and never from morning to night to hear her speak one word of sense; and then as she grows older, instead of having any help from her in the family, to find her a continual cause of anxiety, lest her

wild humours should completely ruin us, that is quite another thing, and enough at last to weary out the patience even of a saint."

"Well, well," replied the master of the house, with a smile, "you have your trials with Undine, and I have mine with the lake. The lake often beats down my dams, and breaks the meshes of my nets, but for all that I have a strong affection for it, and so have you, in spite of your mighty crosses and vexations, for our graceful little child. Is it not true?"

"One cannot be very angry with her," answered the old lady, as she gave her husband an approving smile.

That instant the door flew open, and a fair girl, of wondrous beauty, sprang laughing in, and said, "You have only been making a mock of me, father; for where now is the guest you mentioned?"

The same moment, however, she perceived the knight also, and continued standing before the young man in fixed astonishment. Huldbrand was charmed with her graceful figure, and viewed her lovely features with the more intense interest, as he imagined it was only her surprise that allowed him the opportunity, and that she would soon turn away from his gaze with increased bashfulness. But the event was the very reverse of what he expected; for, after looking at him for a long while, she became more confident, moved nearer, knelt down before him, and while she played with a gold medal

which he wore attached to a rich chain on his breast, exclaimed,

"Why, you beautiful, you kind guest! how have you reached our poor cottage at last? Have you been obliged for years and years to wander about the world before you could catch one glimpse of our nook? Do you come out of that wild forest, my beautiful knight?"

The old woman was so prompt in her reproof, as to allow him no time to answer. She commanded the maiden to rise, show better manners, and go to her work. But Undine, without making any reply, drew a little footstool near Huldbrand's chair, sat down upon it with her netting, and said in a gentle tone—

"I will work here."

The old man did as parents are apt to do with children to whom they have been over-indulgent. He affected to observe nothing of Undine's strange behaviour, and was beginning to talk about something else. But this the maiden did not permit him to do. She broke in upon him, "I have asked our kind guest from whence he has come among us, and he has not yet answered me."

"I come out of the forest, you lovely little vision," Huldbrand returned; and she spoke again:

"You must also tell me how you came to enter that forest, so feared and shunned, and the marvellous adventures you met with in it; for there is no escaping without something of this kind."

Huldbrand felt a slight shudder on remembering what he had witnessed, and looked involuntarily toward the window, for it seemed to him that one of the strange shapes which had come upon him in the forest must be there grinning in through the glass; but he discerned nothing except the deep darkness of night, which had now enveloped the whole prospect. Upon this be became more collected, and was just on the point of beginning his account, when the old man thus interrupted him:

"Not so, sir knight; this is by no means a fit hour for such relations."

But Undine, in a state of high excitement, sprang up from her little stool and cried, placing herself directly before the fisherman: "He shall *not* tell his story, father? he shall not? But it is my will: —he shall!—stop him who may!"

Thus speaking, she stamped her little foot vehemently on the floor, but all with an air of such comic and good-humoured simplicity, that Huldbrand now found it quite as hard to withdraw his gaze from her wild emotion, as he had before from her gentleness and beauty. The old man, on the contrary, burst out in unrestrained displeasure. He severely reproved Undine for her disobedience and her unbecoming carriage toward the stranger, and his good old wife joined him in harping on the same string.

By these rebukes Undine was only excited the more. "If you want to quarrel with me," she

cried, "and will not let me hear what I so much desire, then sleep alone in your smoky old hut!" And swift as an arrow she shot from the door, and vanished amid the darkness of the night.

Huldbrand and the fisherman sprang from their seats, and were rushing to stop the angry girl; but before they could reach the cottage-door, she had disappeared in the stormy darkness without, and no sound, not so much even as that of her light foot-step, betrayed the course she had taken. Huldbrand threw a glance of inquiry toward his host; it almost seemed to him as if the whole of the sweet apparition, which had so suddenly plunged again amid the night, were no other than a continuation of the wonderful forms that had just played their mad pranks with him in the forest. But the old man muttered between his teeth,

"This is not the first time she has treated us in this manner. Now must our hearts be filled with anxiety, and our eyes find no sleep the whole night; for who can assure us, in spite of her past escapes, that she will not some time or other come to harm, if she thus continue out in the dark and alone until daylight?"

"Then pray, for God's sake, father, let us follow her," cried Huldbrand anxiously.

"Wherefore should we?" replied the old man. "It would be a sin were I to suffer you, all alone, to search after the foolish girl amid the lonesomeness of night; and my old limbs would fail to carry

me to this wild rover, even if I knew to what place she has betaken herself."

"Still we ought at least to call after her, and beg her to return," said Huldbrand; and he began to call in tones of earnest entreaty, "Undine! Undine! come back, come back!"

The old man shook his head, and said, "All your shouting, however loud and long, will be of no avail; you know not as yet, sir knight, how self-willed the little thing is." But still, even hoping against hope, he could not himself cease calling out every minute, amid the gloom of night, "Undine! ah, dear Undine! I beseech you, pray come back—only this once."

It turned out, however, exactly as the fisherman had said. No Undine could they hear or see; and as the old man would on no account consent that Huldbrand should go in quest of the fugitive, they were both obliged at last to return into the cottage. There they found the fire on the hearth almost gone out, and the mistress of the house, who took Undine's flight and danger far less to heart than her husband, had already gone to rest. The old man blew up the coals, put on dry wood, and by the fire-light hunted for a flask of wine, which he brought and set between himself and his guest.

"You, sir knight, as well as I," said he, "are anxious on the silly girl's account; and it would be better, I think, to spend part of the night in chatting and drinking, than keep turning and turning

on our rush-mats, and trying in vain to sleep. What is your opinion?"

Huldbrand was well pleased with the plan; the fisherman pressed him to take the empty seat of honour, its worthy occupant having now left it for her couch; and they relished their beverage and enjoyed their chat as two such good men and true ever ought to do. To be sure, whenever the slightest thing moved before the windows, or at times when even nothing was moving, one of them would look up and exclaim, "Here she comes!" Then would they continue silent a few moments, and afterward, when nothing appeared, would shake their heads, breathe out a sigh and go on with their talk.

But as neither could think of anything but Undine, the best plan they could devise was, that the old fisherman should relate, and the knight should hear, in what manner Undine had come to the cottage. So the fisherman began as follows:—

"It is now about fifteen years since I one day crossed the wild forest with fish for the city market. My wife had remained at home as she was wont to do; and at this time for a reason of more than common interest, for although we were beginning to feel the advances of age, God had bestowed upon us an infant of wonderful beauty. It was a little girl; and we already began to ask ourselves the question, whether we ought not, for the advantage of the new-comer, to quit our solitude, and,

the better to bring up this precious gift of Heaven, to remove to some more inhabited place. Poor people, to be sure, cannot in these cases do all you may think they ought, sir knight; but we must all do what we can.

"Well, I went on my way, and this affair would keep running in my head. This slip of land was most dear to me, and I trembled when, amidst the bustle and broils of the city, I thought to myself, 'In a scene of tumult like this, or at least in one not much more quiet, I must soon take up my abode.' But I did not for this murmur against our good God; on the contrary, I praised Him in silence for the new-born babe. I should also speak an untruth, were I to say that anything befell me, either on my passage through the forest to the city, or on my returning homeward, that gave me more alarm than usual, as at that time I had never seen any appearance there which could terrify or annoy me. The Lord was ever with me in those awful shades."

Thus speaking he took his cap reverently from his bald head, and continued to sit for a considerable time in devout thought. He then covered himself again, and went on with his relation.

"On this side the forest, alas! it was on this side, that woe burst upon me. My wife came wildly to meet me, clad in mourning apparel, and her eyes streaming with tears. 'Gracious God!' I cried, 'where's our child? Speak!'

"'With Him on whom you have called, dear husband,' she answered, and we now entered the cottage together, weeping in silence. I looked for the little corpse, almost fearing to find what I was seeking; and then it was I first learnt how all had happened.

"My wife had taken the little one in her arms, and walked out to the shore of the lake. She there sat down by its very brink; and while she was playing with the infant, as free from all fear as she was full of delight, it bent forward on a sudden, as if seeing something very beautiful in the water. My wife saw her laugh, the dear angel, and try to catch the image in her tiny hands; but in a moment—with a motion swifter than sight—she sprang from her mother's arms, and sank in the lake, the watery glass into which she had been gazing. I searched for our lost darling again and again; but it was all in vain; I could nowhere find the least trace of her.

"The same evening we childless parents were sitting together by our cottage hearth. We had no desire to talk, even if our tears would have permitted us. As we thus sat in mournful stillness, gazing into the fire, all at once we heard something without,—a slight rustling at the door. The door flew open, and we saw a little girl, three or four years old, and more beautiful than I can say, standing on the threshold, richly dressed, and smiling upon us. We were struck dumb with astonish-

ment, and I knew not for a time whether the tiny form were a real human being, or a mere mockery of enchantment. But I soon perceived water dripping from her golden hair and rich garments, and that the pretty child had been lying in the water, and stood in immediate need of our help.

"'Wife,' said I, 'no one has been able to save our child for us; but let us do for others what would have made us so blessed could anyone have done it for us.'

"We undressed the little thing, put her to bed, and gave her something to drink: at all this she spoke not a word, but only turned her eyes upon us—eyes blue and bright as sea or sky—and continued looking at us with a smile.

"Next morning we had no reason to fear that she had received any other harm than her wetting, and I now asked her about her parents, and how she could have come to us. But the account she gave was both confused and incredible. She must surely have been born far from here, not only because I have been unable for these fifteen years to learn anything of her birth, but because she then said, and at times continues to say, many things of so very singular a nature, that we neither of us know, after all, whether she may not have dropped among us from the moon; for her talk runs upon golden castles, crystal domes, and Heaven knows what extravagances beside. What, however, she

related with most distinctness was this: that while she was once taking a sail with her mother on the great lake, she fell out of the boat into the water; and that when she first recovered her senses, she was here under our trees, where the gay scenes of the shore filled her with delight.

"We now had another care weighing upon our minds, and one that caused us no small perplexity and uneasiness. We of course very soon determined to keep and bring up the child we had found, in place of our own darling that had been drowned; but who could tell us whether she had been baptised or not? She herself could give us no light on the subject. When we asked her the question, she commonly made answer, that she well knew she was created for God's praise and glory, and that she was willing to let us do with her all that might promote His glory and praise.

"My wife and I reasoned in this way: 'If she has not been baptised, there can be no use in putting off the ceremony; and if she has been, it still is better to have too much of a good thing than too little.'

"Taking this view of our difficulty, we now endeavoured to hit upon a good name for the child, since, while she remained without one, we were often at a loss in our familiar talk, to know what to call her. We at length agreed that Dorothea would be most suitable for her, as I had

somewhere heard it said that this name signified a *gift of God*, and surely she had been sent to us by Providence as a gift, to comfort us in our misery. She, on the contrary, would not so much as hear Dorothea mentioned; she insisted, that as she had been named Undine by her parents, Undine she ought still to be called. It now occurred to me that this was a heathenish name, to be found in no calendar, and I resolved to ask the advice of a priest in the city. He would not listen to the name of Undine; and yielding to my urgent request, he came with me through the enchanted forest in order to perform the rite of baptism here in my cottage.

"The little maid stood before us so prettily adorned, and with such an air of gracefulness, that the heart of the priest softened at once in her presence; and she coaxed him so sweetly, and jested with him so merrily, that he at last remembered nothing of his many objections to the name of Undine.

"Thus, then, was she baptised Undine; and during the holy ceremony she behaved with great propriety and gentleness, wild and wayward as at other times she invariably was; for in this my wife was quite right, when she mentioned the anxiety the child has occasioned us. If I should relate to you——"

At this moment the knight interrupted the fisherman, to direct his attention to a deep sound as of

a rushing flood, which had caught his ear during the talk of the old man. And now the waters came pouring on with redoubled fury before the cottage windows. Both sprang to the door. There they saw, by the light of the now risen moon, the brook which issued from the wood rushing wildly over its banks, and whirling onward with it both stones and branches of trees in its rapid course. The storm, as if awakened by the uproar, burst forth from the clouds, whose immense masses of vapour coursed over the moon with the swiftness of thought; the lake roared beneath the wind that swept the foam from its waves; while the trees of this narrow peninsula groaned from root to topmost branch as they bowed and swung above the torrent.

"Undine! in God's name, Undine!" cried the two men in an agony. No answer was returned. And now, regardless of everything else, they hurried from the cottage, one in this direction, the other in that, searching and calling.

The longer Huldbrand sought Undine beneath the shades of night, and failed to find her, the more anxious and confused he became. The impression that she was a mere phantom of the forest gained a new ascendency over him; indeed, amid the howling of the waves and the tempest, the crashing of the trees, and the entire change of the once so peaceful and beautiful scene, he was tempted to view the whole peninsula, together with

the cottage and its inhabitants, as little more than some mockery of his senses. But still he heard afar off the fisherman's anxious and incessant shouting, "Undine!" and also his aged wife, who was praying and singing psalms.

At length, when he drew near to the brook, which had overflowed its banks, he perceived by the moonlight, that it had taken its wild course directly in front of the haunted forest, so as to change the peninsula into an island.

"Merciful God!" he breathed to himself, "if Undine has ventured a step within that fearful wood, what will become of her? Perhaps it was all owing to her sportive and wayward spirit, and that I would give her no account of my adventures there. And now the stream is rolling between us, she may be weeping alone on the other side in the midst of spectral horrors!"

A shuddering groan escaped him; and clambering over some stones and trunks of overthrown pines, in order to step into the impetuous current, he resolved, either by wading or swimming, to seek the wanderer on the further shore. He felt, it is true, all the dread and shrinking awe creeping over him which he had already suffered by daylight among the now tossing and roaring branches of the forest. More than all, a tall man in white, whom he knew but too well, met his view, as he stood grinning and nodding on the grass beyond the water. But even monstrous forms like

this only impelled him to cross over toward them, when the thought rushed upon him that Undine might be there alone and in the agony of death.

He had already grasped a strong branch of a pine, and stood supporting himself upon it in the whirling current, against which he could with difficulty keep himself erect; but he advanced deeper in with a courageous spirit. That instant a gentle voice of warning cried near him, "Do not venture, do not venture!—that OLD MAN, the STREAM, is too full of tricks to be trusted!" He knew the soft tones of the voice; and while he stood as it were entranced beneath the shadows which had now duskily veiled the moon, his head swam with the swell and rolling of the waves as he saw them momentarily rising above his knee. Still he disdained the thought of giving up his purpose.

"If you are not really there, if you are merely gambolling round me like a mist, may I, too, bid farewell to life, and become a shadow like you, dear, dear Undine!" Thus calling aloud, he again moved deeper into the stream. "Look round you —ah, pray look round you, beautiful young stranger! why rush on death so madly?" cried the voice a second time close by him; and looking on one side he perceived, by the light of the moon, again cloudless, a little island formed by the flood; and crouching upon its flowery turf, beneath the branches of embowering trees, he saw the smiling and lovely Undine.

UNDINE WARNS THE KNIGHT

O how much more gladly than before the young man now plied his sturdy staff! A few steps, and he had crossed the flood that was rushing between himself and the maiden; and he stood near her on the little spot of greensward in security, protected by the old trees. Undine half rose, and she threw her arms around his neck to draw him gently down upon the soft seat by her side.

"Here you shall tell me your story, my beautiful friend," she breathed in a low whisper; "here the cross old people cannot disturb us; and, besides, our roof of leaves here will make quite as good a shelter as their poor cottage."

"It is heaven itself," cried Huldbrand; and folding her in his arms, he kissed the lovely girl with fervour.

The old fisherman, meantime, had come to the margin of the stream, and he shouted across, "Why, how is this, sir knight! I received you with the welcome which one true-hearted man gives to another; and now you sit there caressing my foster-child in secret, while you suffer me in my anxiety to wander through the night in quest of her."

"Not till this moment did I find her myself, old father," cried the knight across the water.

"So much the better," said the fisherman; "but now make haste, and bring her over to me upon firm ground."

To this, however, Undine would by no means

consent. She declared that she would rather enter the wild forest itself with the beautiful stranger, than return to the cottage where she was so thwarted in her wishes, and from which the knight would soon or late go away. Then, throwing her arms round Huldbrand, she sung the following verse with the warbling sweetness of a bird:—

"A rill would leave its misty vale,
And fortunes wild explore;
Weary at length it reached the main,
And sought its vale no more."

The old fisherman wept bitterly at her song, but his emotion seemed to awaken little or no sympathy in her. She kissed and caressed her new friend, who at last said to her: "Undine, if the distress of the old man does not touch your heart, it cannot but move mine. We ought to return to him."

She opened her large blue eyes upon him in amazement, and spoke at last with a slow and doubtful accent, "If you think so, it is well; all is right to me which you think right. But the old man over there must first give me his promise that he will allow you, without objection, to relate what you saw in the wood, and——well, other things will settle themselves."

"Come—only come!" cried the fisherman to her, unable to utter another word. At the same time he stretched his arms wide over the current

towards her, and to give her assurance that he would do what she required, nodded his head. This motion caused his white hair to fall strangely over his face, and Huldbrand could not but remember the nodding white man of the forest. Without allowing anything, however, to produce in him the least confusion, the young knight took the beautiful girl in his arms, and bore her across the narrow channel which the stream had torn away between her little island and the solid shore. The old man fell upon Undine's neck, and found it impossible either to express his joy or to kiss her enough; even the ancient dame came up and embraced the recovered girl most cordially. Every word of censure was carefully avoided; the more so, indeed, as even Undine, forgetting her waywardness, almost overwhelmed her foster-parents with caresses and the prattle of tenderness.

When at length the excess of their joy at recovering their child had subsided, morning had already dawned, shining upon the waters of the lake; the tempest had become hushed, the small birds sung merrily on the moist branches.

As Undine now insisted upon hearing the recital of the knight's promised adventures, the aged couple readily agreed to her wish. Breakfast was brought out beneath the trees which stood behind the cottage toward the lake on the north, and they sat down to it with contented hearts; Undine at the knight's feet on the grass. These arrange-

ments being made, Huldbrand began his story in the following manner:—

"It is now about eight days since I rode into the free imperial city, which lies yonder on the farther side of the forest. Soon after my arrival a splendid tournament and tilting at the ring took place there, and I spared neither my horse nor my lance in the encounters.

"Once, while I was pausing at the lists to rest from the brisk exercise, and was handing back my helmet to one of my attendants, a female figure of extraordinary beauty caught my attention, as, most magnificently attired, she stood looking on at one of the balconies. I learned, on making inquiry of a person near me, that the name of the young lady was Bertalda, and that she was a foster-daughter of one of the powerful dukes of this country. She too, I observed, was gazing at me, and the consequences were such as we young knights are wont to experience; whatever success in riding I might have had before, I was now favoured with still better fortune. That evening I was Bertalda's partner in the dance, and I enjoyed the same distinction during the remainder of the festival."

A sharp pain in his left hand, as it hung carelessly beside him, here interrupted Huldbrand's relation, and drew his eye to the part affected. Undine had fastened her pearly teeth, and not without some keenness too, upon one of his fingers,

appearing at the same time very gloomy and displeased. On a sudden, however, she looked up in his eyes with an expression of tender melancholy, and whispered almost inaudibly,—

"It is all your own fault."

She then covered her face; and the knight, strangely embarrassed and thoughtful, went on with his story.

"This lady, Bertalda, of whom I spoke, is of a proud and wayward spirit. The second day I saw her she pleased me by no means so much as she had the first, and the third day still less. But I continued about her because she showed me more favour than she did any other knight, and it so happened that I playfully asked her to give me one of her gloves. 'When you have entered the haunted forest all alone,' said she; 'when you have explored its wonders, and brought me a full account of them, the glove is yours.' As to getting her glove, it was of no importance to me whatever, but the word had been spoken, and no honourable knight would permit himself to be urged to such a proof of valour a second time."

"I thought," said Undine, interrupting him, "that she loved you."

"It did appear so," replied Huldbrand.

"Well!" exclaimed the maiden, laughing, "this is beyond belief; she must be very stupid. To drive from her one who was dear to her! And worse than all, into that ill-omened wood! The

wood and its mysteries, for all I should have cared, might have waited long enough."

"Yesterday morning, then," pursued the knight, smiling kindly upon Undine, "I set out from the city, my enterprise before me. The early light lay rich upon the verdant turf. It shone so rosy on the slender boles of the trees, and there was so merry a whispering among the leaves, that in my heart I could not but laugh at people who feared meeting anything to terrify them in a spot so delicious. 'I shall soon pass through the forest, and as speedily return,' I said to myself, in the overflow of joyous feeling, and ere I was well aware, I had entered deep among the green shades, while of the plain that lay behind me I was no longer able to catch a glimpse.

"Then the conviction for the first time impressed me, that in a forest of so great extent I might very easily become bewildered, and that this, perhaps, might be the only danger which was likely to threaten those who explored its recesses. So I made a halt, and turned myself in the direction of the sun, which had meantime risen somewhat higher, and while I was looking up to observe it, I saw something black among the boughs of a lofty oak. My first thought was, 'It is a bear!' and I grasped my weapon. The object then accosted me from above in a human voice, but in a tone most harsh and hideous: 'If I, overhead here, do not gnaw off these dry branches, Sir Noodle, what

shall we have to roast you with when midnight comes?' And with that it grinned, and made such a rattling with the branches that my courser became mad with affright, and rushed furiously forward with me before I had time to see distinctly what sort of a devil's beast it was."

"You must not speak so," said the old fisherman, crossing himself. His wife did the same, without saying a word, and Undine, while her eye sparkled with delight, looked at the knight and said, "The best of the story is, however, that as yet they have not roasted you! Go on, now, you beautiful knight."

The knight then went on with his adventures. "My horse was so wild, that he well-nigh rushed with me against limbs and trunks of trees. He was dripping with sweat through terror, heat, and the violent straining of his muscles. Still he refused to slacken his career. At last, altogether beyond my control, he took his course directly up a stony steep, when suddenly a tall white man flashed before me, and threw himself athwart the way my mad steed was taking. At this apparition he shuddered with new affright, and stopped, trembling. I took this chance of recovering my command of him, and now for the first time perceived that my deliverer, so far from being a white *man*, was only a brook of silver brightness, foaming near me in its descent from the hill, while it crossed and arrested my horse's course with its rush of waters."

"Thanks, thanks, dear brook!" cried Undine, clapping her little hands. But the old man shook his head, and looked down in deep thought.

"Hardly had I well settled myself in my saddle, and got the reins in my grasp again," Huldbrand pursued, "when a wizard-like dwarf of a man was already standing at my side, diminutive and ugly beyond conception, his complexion of a brownish yellow, and his nose scarcely smaller than the rest of him together. The fellow's mouth was slit almost from ear to ear, and he showed his teeth with a grinning smile of idiot courtesy, while he overwhelmed me with bows and scrapes innumerable. The farce now becoming excessively irksome, I thanked him in the fewest words I could well use, turned about my still trembling charger, and purposed either to seek another adventure, or should I meet with none, to take my way back to the city; for the sun, during my wild chase, had passed the meridian, and was now hastening toward the west. But this villain of a dwarf sprang at the same instant, and, with a turn as rapid as lightning, stood before my horse again. 'Clear the way there!' I cried fiercely; 'the beast is wild, and will make nothing of running over you.'

"'Ay, ay,' cried the imp with a snarl, and snorting out a laugh still more frightfully idiotic; 'pay me, first pay what you owe me. I stopped your fine little nag for you; without my help, both you and he would be now sprawling below there in that

stony ravine. Hu! from what a horrible plunge I've saved you!'

"'Well, don't make any more faces,' said I, 'but take your money and be off, though every word you say is false. It was the brook there, you miserable thing, and not you that saved me,' and at the same time I dropped a piece of gold into his wizard cap, which he had taken from his head while he was begging before me.

"I then trotted off and left him, but he screamed after me; and on a sudden, with inconceivable quickness, he was close by my side. I started my horse into a gallop. He galloped on with me, though it seemed with great difficulty, and with a strange movement, half ludicrous and half horrible, forcing at the same time every limb and feature into distortion, he held up the gold piece and screamed at every leap, 'Counterfeit! false! false coin! counterfeit!' and such was the strange sound that issued from his hollow breast, you would have supposed that at every scream he must have tumbled upon the ground dead. All this while his disgusting red tongue hung lolling from his mouth.

"I stopped bewildered, and asked, 'What do you mean by this screaming? Take another piece of gold, take two, but leave me.'

"He then began again his hideous salutations of courtesy, and snarled out as before, 'Not gold, it shall not be gold, my young gentleman. I have

too much of that trash already, as I will show you in no time.'

"At that moment, and thought itself could not have been more instantaneous, I seemed to have acquired new powers of sight. I could see through the solid green plain, as if it were green glass, and the smooth surface of the earth were round as a globe, and within it I saw crowds of goblins, who were pursuing their pastime and making themselves merry with silver and gold. They were tumbling and rolling about, heads up and heads down; they pelted one another in sport with the precious metals, and with irritating malice blew gold-dust in one another's eyes. My odious companion ordered the others to reach him up a vast quantity of gold; this he showed to me with a laugh, and then flung it again ringing and chinking down the measureless abyss.

"After this contemptuous disregard of gold, he held up the piece I had given him, showing it to his brother goblins below, and they laughed immoderately at a coin so worthless, and hissed me. At last, raising their fingers all smutched with ore, they pointed them at me in scorn; and wilder and wilder, and thicker and thicker, and madder and madder, the crowd were clambering up to where I sat gazing at these wonders. Then terror seized me, as it had before seized my horse. I drove my spurs into his sides, and how far he rushed with me through the forest, during this second of my wild heats, it is impossible to say.

"At last, when I had now come to a dead halt again, the cool of evening was around me. I caught the gleam of a white footpath through the branches of the trees; and presuming it would lead me out of the forest toward the city, I was desirous of working my way into it. But a face, perfectly white and indistinct, with features ever changing, kept thrusting itself out and peering at me between the leaves. I tried to avoid it, but wherever I went, there too appeared the unearthly face. I was maddened with rage at this interruption, and determined to drive my steed at the appearance full tilt, when such a cloud of white foam came rushing upon me and my horse, that we were almost blinded and glad to turn about and escape. Thus from step to step it forced us on, and ever aside from the footpath, leaving us for the most part only one direction open. When we advanced in this, it kept following close behind us, yet did not occasion the smallest harm or inconvenience.

"When at times I looked about me at the form, I perceived that the white face, which had splashed upon us its shower of foam, was resting on a body equally white, and of more than gigantic size. Many a time, too, I received the impression that the whole appearance was nothing more than a wandering stream or torrent; but respecting this I could never attain to any certainty. We both of us, horse and rider, became weary as we shaped our course according to the movements of the

white man, who continued nodding his head at us, as if he would say, 'Quite right!' And thus, at length, we came out here, at the edge of the wood, where I saw the fresh turf, the waters of the lake, and your little cottage, and where the tall white man disappeared."

"Well, Heaven be praised that he is gone!" cried the old fisherman; and he now began to talk of how his guest could most conveniently return to his friends in the city. Upon this, Undine began laughing to herself, but so very low that the sound was hardly perceivable. Huldbrand observing it, said, "I thought you were glad to see me here; why, then, do you now appear so happy when our talk turns upon my going away?"

"Because you cannot go away," answered Undine. "Pray make a single attempt; try with a boat, with your horse, or alone, as you please, to cross that forest stream which has burst its bounds; or rather, make no trial at all, for you would be dashed to pieces by the stones and trunks of trees which you see driven on with such violence. And as to the lake, I know that well; even my father dares not venture out with his boat far enough to help you."

Huldbrand rose, smiling, in order to look about and observe whether the state of things were such as Undine had represented it to be. The old man accompanied him, and the maiden went merrily dancing beside them. They found all, in fact, just

as Undine had said, and that the knight, whether willing or not willing, must submit to remaining on the island, so lately a peninsula, until the flood should subside.

When the three were now returning to the cottage after their ramble, the knight whispered in the ear of the little maiden, "Well, dear Undine, are you angry at my remaining?"

"Ah," she pettishly replied, "do not speak to me! If I had not bitten you, who knows what fine things you would have put into your story about Bertalda?"

It may have happened to thee, my dear reader, after being much driven to and fro in the world, to reach at length a spot where all was well with thee. The love of home and of its peaceful joys, innate to all, again sprang up in thy heart; thou thoughtest that thy home was decked with all the flowers of childhood, and of that purest, deepest love which had grown upon the graves of thy beloved, and that here it was good to live and to build houses. Even if thou didst err, and hast had bitterly to mourn thy error, it is nothing to my purpose, and thou thyself wilt not like to dwell on the sad recollection. But recall those unspeakably sweet feelings, that angelic greeting of peace, and thou wilt be able to understand what was the happiness of the knight Huldbrand during his abode on that narrow slip of land.

He frequently observed, with heartfelt satisfac-

tion, that the forest-stream continued every day to swell and roll on with a more impetuous sweep; and this forced him to prolong his stay on the island. Part of the day he wandered about with an old cross-bow, which he found in a corner of the cottage, and had repaired in order to shoot the water-fowl that flew over; and all that he was lucky enough to hit he brought home for a good roast in the kitchen. When he came in with his booty, Undine seldom failed to greet him with a scolding, because he had cruelly deprived the happy joyous little creatures of life as they were sporting above in the blue ocean of the air; nay more, she often wept bitterly when she viewed the water-fowl dead in his hand. But at other times, when he returned without having shot any, she gave him a scolding equally serious, since, owing to his carelessness and want of skill, they must now put up with a dinner of fish. Her playful taunts ever touched his heart with delight; the more so, as she generally strove to make up for her pretended ill-humour with endearing caresses.

The old people saw with pleasure this familiarity of Undine and Huldbrand; they looked upon them as betrothed, or even as married, and living with them in their old age on their island, now torn off from the mainland. The loneliness of his situation strongly impressed also the young Huldbrand with the feeling that he was already Undine's bridegroom. It seemed to him as if, beyond those

UNDINE RETURNS

encompassing floods, there were no other world in existence, or at any rate as if he could never cross them, and again associate with the world of other men; and when at times his grazing steed raised his head and neighed to him, seemingly inquiring after his knightly achievements and reminding him of them, or when his coat-of-arms sternly shone upon him from the embroidery of his saddle and the caparisons of his horse, or when his sword happened to fall from the nail on which it was hanging in the cottage, and flashed on his eye as it slipped from the scabbard in its fall, he quieted the doubts of his mind by saying to himself, "Undine cannot be a fisherman's daughter. She is, in all probability, a native of some remote region, and a member of some illustrious family."

There was one thing, indeed, to which he had a strong aversion: this was to hear the old dame reproving Undine. The wild girl, it is true, commonly laughed at the reproof, making no attempt to conceal the extravagance of her mirth; but it appeared to him like touching his own honour; and still he found it impossible to blame the aged wife of the fisherman, since Undine always deserved at least ten times as many reproofs as she received; so he continued to feel in his heart an affectionate tenderness for the ancient mistress of the house, and his whole life flowed on in the calm stream of contentment.

There came, however, an interruption at last.

The fisherman and the knight had been accustomed at dinner, and also in the evening when the wind roared without, as it rarely failed to do towards night, to enjoy together a flask of wine. But now their whole stock, which the fisherman had from time to time brought with him from the city, was at last exhausted, and they were both quite out of humour at the circumstance. That day Undine laughed at them excessively, but they were not disposed to join in her jests with the same gaiety as usual. Toward evening she went out of the cottage, to escape, as she said, the sight of two such long and tiresome faces.

While it was yet twilight, some appearances of a tempest seemed to be again mustering in the sky, and the waves already heaved and roared around them: the knight and the fisherman sprang to the door in terror, to bring home the maiden, remembering the anguish of that night when Huldbrand had first entered the cottage. But Undine met them at the same moment, clapping her little hands in high glee.

"What will you give me," she cried, "to provide you with wine? or rather, you need not give me anything," she continued; "for I am already satisfied, if you look more cheerful, and are in better spirits, than throughout this last most wearisome day. Only come with me; the forest stream has driven ashore a cask; and I will be condemned to sleep through a whole week, if it is not a wine-cask."

The men followed her, and actually found, in a bushy cove of the shore, a cask, which inspired them with as much joy as if they were sure it contained the generous old wine for which they were thirsting. They first of all, and with as much expedition as possible, rolled it toward the cottage; for heavy clouds were again rising in the west, and they could discern the waves of the lake in the fading light lifting their white foaming heads, as if looking out for the rain, which threatened every instant to pour upon them. Undine helped the men as much as she was able; and as the shower, with a roar of wind, came suddenly sweeping on in rapid pursuit, she raised her finger with a merry menace toward the dark mass of clouds, and cried:

"You cloud, you cloud, have a care! beware how you wet us; we are some way from shelter yet."

The old man reproved her for this sally, as a sinful presumption; but she laughed to herself softly, and no mischief came from her wild behaviour. Nay more, what was beyond their expectation, they reached their comfortable hearth unwet, with their prize secured; but the cask had hardly been broached, and proved to contain wine of a remarkably fine flavour, when the rain poured down unrestrained from the black cloud, the tempest raved through the tops of the trees, and swept far over the billows of the deep.

Having immediately filled several bottles from the cask, which promised them a supply for a long time, they drew round the glowing hearth; and, comfortably secured from the tempest, they sat tasting the flavour of their wine and bandying jests.

But the old fisherman suddenly became extremely grave, and said, "Ah, great God! here we sit, rejoicing over this rich gift, while he to whom it first belonged, and from whom it was wrested by the fury of the stream, must there also, it is more than probable, have lost his life."

"No such thing," said Undine, smiling, as she filled the knight's cup to the brim.

But he exclaimed: "By my unsullied honour, old father, if I knew where to find and rescue him, no fear of exposure to the night, nor any peril, should deter me from making the attempt. At least, I can promise you that if I again reach an inhabited country, I will find out the owner of this wine or his heirs, and make double and triple reimbursement."

The old man was gratified with this assurance; he gave the knight a nod of approbation, and now drained his cup with an easier conscience and more relish.

Undine, however, said to Huldbrand: "As to the repayment and your gold, you may do whatever you like. But what you said about your venturing out, and searching, and exposing yourself to danger, appears to me far from wise. I should

cry my very eyes out, should you perish in such a wild attempt; and is it not true that you would prefer staying here with me and the good wine?"

"Most assuredly," answered Huldbrand, smiling.

"Then, you see," replied Undine, "you spoke unwisely. For charity begins at home; and why need we trouble ourselves about our neighbours?"

The mistress of the house turned away from her, sighing and shaking her head; while the fisherman forgot his wonted indulgence toward the graceful maiden, and thus rebuked her:

"That sounds exactly as if you had been brought up by heathens and Turks"; and he finished his reproof hy adding, "May God forgive both me and you—unfeeling child!"

"Well, say what you will, that is what *I* think and feel," replied Undine, "whoever brought me up; and all your talking cannot help it."

"Silence!" exclaimed the fisherman, in a voice of stern rebuke; and she, who with all her wild spirit was extremely alive to fear, shrank from him, moved close up to Huldbrand, trembling, and said very softly:

"Are you also angry, dear friend?"

The knight pressed her soft hand, and tenderly stroked her locks. He was unable to utter a word, for his vexation, arising from the old man's severity towards Undine, closed his lips; and thus the two couple sat opposite to each other, at once heated with anger and in embarrassed silence.

In the midst of this stillness a low knocking at the door startled them all; for there are times when a slight circumstance, coming unexpectedly upon us, startles us like something supernatural. But there was the further source of alarm, that the enchanted forest lay so near them, and that their place of abode seemed at present inaccessible to any human being. While they were looking upon one another in doubt, the knocking was again heard, accompanied with a deep groan. The knight sprang to seize his sword. But the old man said, in a low whisper:

"If it be what I fear it is, no weapon of yours can protect us."

Undine in the meanwhile went to the door, and cried with the firm voice of fearless displeasure: "Spirits of the earth! if mischief be your aim, Kühleborn shall teach you better manners."

The terror of the rest was increased by this wild speech; they looked fearfully upon the girl, and Huldbrand was just recovering presence of mind enough to ask what she meant, when a voice reached them from without:

"I am no spirit of the earth, though a spirit still in its earthly body. You that are within the cottage there, if you fear God and would afford me assistance, open your door to me."

By the time these words were spoken, Undine had already opened it; and the lamp throwing a strong light upon the stormy night, they perceived

an aged priest without, who stepped back in amaze when his eye fell on the unexpected sight of a little damsel of such exquisite beauty. Well might he think there must be magic in the wind, and witchcraft at work, when a form of such surpassing loveliness appeared at the door of so humble a dwelling. So he lifted up his voice in prayer:

"Let all good spirits praise the Lord God!"

"I am no spectre," said Undine, with a smile. "Do I look so very frightful? And you see that I do not shrink from holy words. I too have knowledge of God, and understand the duty of praising Him; every one, to be sure, has his own way of doing this, for so He has created us. Come in, father; you will find none but worthy people here."

The holy man came bowing in, and cast round a glance of scrutiny, wearing at the same time a very placid and venerable air. But water was dropping from every fold of his dark garments, from his long white beard and the white locks of his hair. The fisherman and the knight took him to another apartment, and furnished him with a change of raiment, while they gave his own clothes to the women to dry. The aged stranger thanked them in a manner the most humble and courteous; but on the knight's offering him his splendid cloak to wrap round him, he could not be persuaded to take it, but chose instead an old grey coat that belonged to the fisherman.

They then returned to the common apartment.

The mistress of the house immediately offered her great chair to the priest, and continued urging it upon him till she saw him fairly in possession of it. "You are old and exhausted," said she, "and are, moreover, a man of God."

Undine shoved under the stranger's feet her little stool, on which at all other times she used to sit near to Huldbrand, and showed herself most gentle and amiable towards the old man. Huldbrand whispered some raillery in her ear, but she replied, gravely:

"He is a minister of that Being who created us all; and holy things are not to be treated with lightness."

The knight and the fisherman now refreshed the priest with food and wine; and when he had somewhat recovered his strength and spirits, he began to relate how he had the day before set out from his cloister, which was situated far off beyond the great lake, in order to visit the bishop, and acquaint him with the distress into which the cloister and its tributary villages had fallen, owing to the extraordinary floods. After a long and wearisome wandering, on account of the rise of the waters, he had been this day compelled toward evening to procure the aid of a couple of boatmen, and cross over an arm of the lake which had burst its usual boundary.

"But hardly," continued he, "had our small ferry-boat touched the waves, when that furious

tempest burst forth which is still raging over our heads. It seemed as if the billows had been waiting our approach only to rush on us with a wilder madness. The oars were wrested from the grasp of my men in an instant; and shivered by the resistless force, they drove farther and farther out before us upon the waves. Unable to direct our course, we yielded to the blind power of nature, and seemed to fly over the surges toward your distant shore, which we already saw looming through the mist and foam of the deep. Then it was at last that our boat turned short from its course, and rocked with a motion that became more and more wild and dizzy: I know not whether it was overset, or the violence of the motion threw me overboard. In my agony and struggle at the thought of a near and terrible death, the waves bore me onward, till I was cast ashore here beneath the trees of your island."

"Yes, an island!" cried the fisherman; "a short time ago it was only a point of land. But now, since the forest-stream and lake have become all but mad, it appears to be entirely changed."

"I observed something of it," replied the priest, "as I stole along the shore in the obscurity; and hearing nothing around me but a sort of wild uproar, I perceived at last that the noise came from a point exactly where a beaten footpath disappeared. I now caught sight of the light in your cottage, and ventured hither, where I cannot suffi-

ciently thank my heavenly Father that, after preserving me from the waters, He has also conducted me to such pious people as you are; and the more so, as it is difficult to say whether I shall ever behold any other persons in this world except you four."

"What mean you by those words?" asked the fisherman.

"Can you tell me, then, how long this commotion of the elements will last?" replied the priest. "I am old; the stream of my life may easily sink into the ground and vanish before the overflowing of that forest-stream shall subside. And, indeed, it is not impossible that more and more of the foaming waters may rush in between you and yonder forest, until you are so far removed from the rest of the world, that your small fishing-boat may be incapable of passing over, and the inhabitants of the continent entirely forget you in your old age amid the dissipation and diversions of life."

At this melancholy foreboding the old lady shrank back with a feeling of alarm, crossed herself, and cried, "God forbid!"

But the fisherman looked upon her with a smile, and said, "What a strange being is man! Suppose the worst to happen; our state would not be different; at any rate, your own would not, dear wife, from what it is at present. For have you, these many years, been farther from home than the border of the forest? And have you seen a

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single human being beside Undine and myself? It is now only a short time since the coming of the knight and the priest. They will remain with us, even if we do become a forgotten island; so after all, you will be a gainer."

"I know not," replied the ancient dame; "it is a dismal thought, when brought fairly home to the mind, that we are for ever separated from mankind, even though in fact we never do know nor see them."

"Then *you* will remain with us—then you will remain with us!" whispered Undine, in a voice scarcely audible and half singing, while she nestled closer to Huldbrand's side. But he was immersed in the deep and strange musings of his own mind. The region, on the farther side of the forest-river, seemed, since the last words of the priest, to have been withdrawing farther and farther, in dim perspective, from his view; and the blooming island on which he lived grew green and smiled more freshly in his fancy. His bride glowed like the fairest rose, not of this obscure nook only, but even of the whole wide world; and the priest was now present.

Added to which, the mistress of the family was directing an angry glance at Undine, because, even in the presence of the priest, she leant so fondly on the knight; and it seemed as if she was on the point of breaking out in harsh reproof. Then burst forth from the mouth of Huldbrand, as he

turned to the priest, "Father, you here see before you an affianced pair; and if this maiden and these good old people have no objection, you shall unite us this very evening."

The aged couple were both exceedingly surprised. They had often, it is true, thought of this, but as yet they had never mentioned it; and now when the knight spoke, it came upon them like something wholly new and unexpected. Undine became suddenly grave, and looked down thoughtfully, while the priest made inquiries respecting the circumstances of their acquaintance, and asked the old people whether they gave their consent to the union. After a great number of questions and answers, the affair was arranged to the satisfaction of all; and the mistress of the house went to prepare the bridal apartment for the young couple, and also, with a view to grace the nuptial solemnity, to seek for two consecrated tapers, which she had for a long time kept by her, for such an occasion.

The knight in the meanwhile busied himself about his golden chain, for the purpose of disengaging two of its links, that he might make an exchange of rings with his bride. But when she saw his object, she started from her trance of musing, and exclaimed—

"Not so! my parents by no means sent me into the world so perfectly destitute; on the contrary, they foresaw, even at that early period, that such a night as this would come."

Thus speaking she went out of the room, and a moment after returned with two costly rings, of which she gave one to her bridegroom, and kept the other for herself. The old fisherman was beyond measure astonished at this; and his wife, who was just re-entering the room, was even more surprised than he, that neither of them had ever seen these jewels in the child's possession.

"My parents," said Undine, "sewed these trinkets to that beautiful raiment which I wore the very day I came to you. They also charged me on no account whatever to mention them to anyone before my wedding evening. At the time of my coming, therefore, I took them off in secret, and have kept them concealed to the present hour."

The priest now cut short all further questioning and wondering, while he lighted the consecrated tapers, placed them on a table, and ordered the bridal pair to stand opposite to him. He then pronounced the few solemn words of the ceremony, and made them one. The elder couple gave the younger their blessing; and the bride, gently trembling and thoughtful, leaned upon the knight.

The priest then spoke out: "You are strange people, after all; for why did you tell me that you were the only inhabitants of the island? so far is this from being true, I have seen, the whole time I was performing the ceremony, a tall, stately man, in a white mantle, standing opposite to me, looking in at the window. He must be still waiting before

the door, if peradventure you would invite him to come in."

"God forbid!" cried the old lady, shrinking back; the fisherman shook his head, without opening his lips; and Huldbrand sprang to the window. It seemed to *him* that he could still discern a white streak, which soon disappeared in the gloom. He convinced the priest that he must have been mistaken in his impression; and they all sat down together round a bright and comfortable hearth.

Before the nuptial ceremony, and during its performance, Undine had shown a modest gentleness and maidenly reserve; but it now seemed as if all the wayward freaks that effervesced within her burst forth with an extravagance only the more bold and unrestrained. She teased her bridegroom, her foster-parents, and even the priest, whom she had just now revered so highly, with all sorts of childish tricks; but when the ancient dame was about to reprove her too frolicsome spirit, the knight, in a few words, imposed silence upon her by speaking of Undine as his wife.

The knight was himself, indeed, just as little pleased with Undine's childish behaviour as the rest; but all his looks and half-reproachful words were to no purpose. It is true, whenever the bride observed the dissatisfaction of her husband —and this occasionally happened—she became more quiet, placed herself beside him, stroked his

face with caressing fondness, whispered something smilingly in his ear, and in this manner smoothed the wrinkles that were gathering on his brow. But the moment after, some wild whim would make her resume her antic movements: and all went worse than before.

The priest then spoke in a kind although serious tone: "My fair young maiden, surely no one can look on you without pleasure; but remember betimes so to attune your soul that it may produce a harmony ever in accordance with the soul of your wedded bridegroom."

"SOUL!" cried Undine, with a laugh. "What you say has a remarkably pretty sound; and for most people, too, it may be a very instructive and profitable caution. But when a person has no soul at all, how, I pray you, can such attuning be then possible? And this, in truth, is just my condition."

The priest was much hurt, but continued silent in holy displeasure, and turned away his face from the maiden in sorrow. She, however, went up to him with the most winning sweetness, and said:

"Nay, I entreat you, first listen to me, before you are angry with me; for your anger is painful to me, and you ought not to give pain to a creature that has not hurt you. Only have patience with me, and I will explain to you every word of what I meant."

It was evident that she had come to say some-

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thing important; when she suddenly faltered as if seized with inward shuddering, and burst into a passion of tears. They were none of them able to understand the intenseness of her feelings; and, with mingled emotions of fear and anxiety, they gazed on her in silence. Then wiping away her tears, and looking earnestly at the priest, she at last said:

"There must be something lovely, but at the same time something most awful, about a soul. In the name of God, holy man, were it not better that we never shared a gift so mysterious?"

Again she paused, and restrained her tears, as if waiting for an answer. All in the cottage had risen from their seats, and stepped back from her with horror. She, however, seemed to have eyes for no one but the holy man: an awful curiosity was painted on her features, which appeared terrible to the others.

"Heavily must the soul weigh down its possessor," she pursued, when no one returned her any answer—"very heavily! for already its approaching image overshadows me with anguish and mourning. And, alas, I have till now been so merry and lighthearted!" and she burst into another flood of tears, and covered her face with her veil.

The priest, going up to her with a solemn look, now addressed himself to her, and conjured her, by the name of God most holy, if any spirit of evil possessed her, to remove the light covering from

her face. But she sank before him on her knees, and repeated after him every sacred expression he uttered, giving praise to God, and protesting "that she wished well to the whole world."

The priest then spoke to the knight: "Sir bridegroom, I leave you alone with her whom I have united to you in marriage. So far as I can discover, there is nothing of evil in her, but assuredly much that is wonderful. What I recommend to you is—prudence, love, and fidelity."

Thus speaking, he left the apartment; and the fisherman, with his wife, followed him, crossing themselves.

Undine had sunk upon her knees. She uncovered her face, and exclaimed, while she looked fearfully round upon Huldbrand, "Alas! you will now refuse to look upon me as your own; and still I have done nothing evil, poor unhappy child that I am!" She spoke these words with a look so infinitely sweet and touching, that her bridegroom forgot both the confession that had shocked, and the mystery that had perplexed him; and hastening to her, he raised her in his arms. She smiled through her tears; and that smile was like the morning light playing upon a small stream. "You cannot desert me!" she whispered, confidingly, and stroked the knight's cheeks with her little soft hands. He turned away from the frightful thoughts that still lurked in the recesses of his soul, and were persuading him that he had been

married to a fairy, or some spiteful and mischievous being of the spirit-world. Only the single question, and that almost unawares, escaped from his lips:

"Dearest Undine, tell me this one thing: what was it you meant by 'spirits of earth' and 'Kühleborn,' when the priest stood knocking at the door?"

"Tales! mere tales of children!" answered Undine, laughing, now quite restored to her wonted gaiety. "I first frightened you with them, and you frightened me. This is the end of the story, and of our nuptial evening."

"Nay, not so," replied the enamoured knight, extinguishing the tapers, and a thousand times kissing his beautiful and beloved bride; while, lighted by the moon that shone brightly through the windows, he bore her into their bridal apartment.

The fresh light of morning woke the young married pair: but Huldbrand lay lost in silent reflection. Whenever, during the night he had fallen asleep, strange and horrible dreams of spectres had disturbed him; and these shapes, grinning at him by stealth, strove to disguise themselves as beautiful females; and from beautiful females they all at once assumed the appearance of dragons. And when he started up, aroused by the intrusion of these hideous forms, the moonlight shone pale and cold before the windows without. He looked affrighted at Undine, in whose arms he had fallen

asleep: and she was reposing in unaltered beauty and sweetness beside him. Then pressing her rosy lips with a light kiss, he again fell into a slumber, only to be awakened by new terrors.

When fully awake, he had thought over these weird visions. He reproached himself for any doubt that could lead him into error in regard to his lovely wife. He also confessed to her his injustice; but she only gave him her fair hand, sighed deeply, and remained silent. Yet a glance of fervent tenderness, an expression of the soul beaming in her eyes, such as he had never witnessed there before, left him in undoubted assurance that Undine bore him no ill-will.

He then rose joyfully, and leaving her, went to the common apartment, where the inmates of the house had already met. The three were sitting round the hearth with an air of anxiety about them, as if they feared trusting themselves to raise their voice above a low, apprehensive undertone. The priest appeared to be praying in his inmost spirit, with a view to avert some fatal calamity. But when they observed the young husband come forth so cheerful, they dispelled the cloud that remained upon their brows: the old fisherman even began to laugh with the knight till his aged wife herself could not help smiling with great good-humour.

Undine had in the meantime got ready, and now entered the room; all rose to meet her, but

remained fixed in perfect admiration—she was so changed, and yet the same. The priest, with paternal affection beaming from his countenance, first went up to her; and as he raised his hand to pronounce a blessing, the beautiful bride sank on her knees before him with religious awe; she begged his pardon in terms both respectful and submissive for any foolish things she might have uttered the evening before, and entreated him with emotion to pray for the welfare of her soul. She then rose, kissed her foster-parents, and, after thanking them for all the kindness they had shown her, said:

"Oh, I now feel in my inmost heart how much, how infinitely much, you have done for me, you dear, dear friends of my childhood!"

At first she was wholly unable to tear herself away from their affectionate caresses; but the moment she saw the good old mother busy in getting breakfast, she went to the hearth, applied herself to cooking the food and putting it on the table, and would not suffer her to take the least share in the work.

She continued in this frame of spirit the whole day: calm, kind, attentive—half matronly, and half girlish. The three who had been longest acquainted with her expected every instant to see her capricious spirit break out in some whimsical change or sportive vagary. But their fears were quite unnecessary. Undine continued as mild

and gentle as an angel. The priest found it all but impossible to remove his eyes from her; and he often said to the bridegroom:

"The bounty of Heaven, sir, through me its unworthy instrument, entrusted to you yesterday an invaluable treasure; cherish it as you ought, and it will promote your temporal and eternal welfare."

Toward evening Undine was hanging upon the knight's arm with lowly tenderness, while she drew him gently out before the door, where the setting sun shone richly over the fresh grass, and upon the high, slender boles of the trees. Her emotion was visible: the dew of sadness and love swam in her eyes, while a tender and fearful secret seemed to hover upon her lips, but was only made known by hardly-breathed sighs. She led her husband farther and farther onward without speaking. When he asked her questions, she replied only with looks, in which, it is true, there appeared to be no immediate answer to his inquiries, but a whole heaven of love and timid devotion. Thus they reached the margin of the swollen forest-stream, and the knight was astonished to see it gliding away with so gentle a murmuring of its waves, that no vestige of its former swell and wildness was now discernible.

"By morning it will be wholly drained off," said the beautiful wife, almost weeping, "and you will then be able to travel, without anything to hinder you, whithersoever you will."

"Not without you, dear Undine," replied the knight, laughing; "think, only, were I disposed to leave you, both the church and the spiritual powers, the emperor and the laws of the realm, would require the fugitive to be seized and restored to you."

"All this depends on you—all depends on you," whispered his little companion, half weeping and half smiling. "But I still feel sure that you will not leave me; I love you too deeply to fear that misery. Now bear me over to that little island which lies before us. There shall the decision be made. I could easily, indeed, glide through that mere rippling of the water without your aid, but it is so sweet to lie in your arms; and should you determine to put me away, I shall have rested in them once more, . . . for the last time."

Huldbrand was so full of strange anxiety and emotion, that he knew not what answer to make her. He took her in his arms and carried her over, now first realising the fact that this was the same little island from which he had borne her back to the old fisherman, the first night of his arrival. On the farther side, he placed her upon the soft grass, and was throwing himself lovingly near his beautiful burden; but she said to him, "Not here, but opposite me. I shall read my doom in your eyes, even before your lips pronounce it: now listen attentively to what I shall relate to you." And she began:

"You must know, my own love, that there are beings in the elements which bear the strongest resemblance to the human race, and which, at the same time, but seldom become visible to you. The wonderful salamanders sparkle and sport amid the flames; deep in the earth the meagre and malicious gnomes pursue their revels; the forest-spirits belong to the air, and wander in the woods; while in the seas, rivers, and streams live the widespread race of water-spirits. These last, beneath resounding domes of crystal, through which the sky can shine with its sun and stars, inhabit a region of light and beauty; lofty coral-trees glow with blue and crimson fruits in their gardens; they walk over the pure sand of the sea, among exquisitely variegated shells, and amid whatever of beauty the old world possessed, such as the present is no more worthy to enjoy—creations which the floods covered with their secret veils of silver; and now these noble monuments sparkle below, stately and solemn, and bedewed by the water, which loves them, and calls forth from their crevices delicate moss-flowers and enwreathing tufts of sedge.

"Now the nation that dwell there are very fair and lovely to behold, for the most part more beautiful than human beings. Many a fisherman has been so fortunate as to catch a view of a delicate maiden of the waters, while she was floating and singing upon the deep. He would then spread far

UNDINE TELLS HULDBRAND

the fame of her beauty; and to such wonderful females men are wont to give the name of Undines. But what need of saying more?—You, my dear husband, now actually behold an Undine before you."

The knight would have persuaded himself that his lovely wife was under the influence of one of her odd whims, and that she was only amusing herself and him with her extravagant

inventions. He wished it might be so. But with whatever emphasis he said this to himself, he still could not credit the hope for a moment: a strange shivering shot through his soul; unable to utter a word, he gazed upon the sweet speaker with a fixed eye. She shook her head in distress, sighed from her full

heart, and then proceeded in the following manner:—

"We should be far superior to you, who are another race of the human family,—for we also call ourselves human beings, as we resemble them in form and features—had we not one evil peculiar to ourselves. Both we and the beings I have mentioned as inhabiting the other elements vanish into air at death and go out of existence, spirit and body, so that no vestige of us remains; and when you hereafter awake to a purer state of being, we shall remain where sand, and sparks, and wind, and waves remain. Thus we have no souls; the element moves us, and, again, is obedient to our will, while we live, though it scatters us like dust when we die; and as we have nothing to trouble us, we are as merry as nightingales, little gold-fishes, and other pretty children of nature.

"But all beings aspire to rise in the scale of existence higher than they are. It was therefore the wish of my father, who is a powerful water-prince in the Mediterranean Sea, that his only daughter should become possessed of a soul, although she should have to endure many of the sufferings of those who share that gift.

"Now the race to which I belong have no other means of obtaining a soul than by forming with an individual of your own the most intimate union of love. I am now possessed of a soul, and my soul thanks you, my best beloved, and never shall cease

to thank you, if you do not render my whole future life miserable. For what will become of me, if you avoid and reject me? Still, I would not keep you as my own by artifice. And should you decide to cast me off, then do it now, and return alone to the shore. I will plunge into this brook, where my uncle will receive me; my uncle, who here in the forest, far removed from his other friends, passes his strange and solitary existence. But he is powerful, as well as revered and beloved by many great rivers; and as he brought me hither to the fisherman a light-hearted and laughing child, he will take me home to my parents a woman, gifted with a soul, with power to love and to suffer."

She was about to add something more, when Huldbrand, with the most heartfelt tenderness and love clasped her in his arms, and again bore her back to the shore. There, amid tears and kisses, he first swore never to forsake his affectionate wife, and esteemed himself even more happy than Pygmalion, for whom Venus gave life to his beautiful statue, and thus changed it into a beloved wife. Supported by his arm, and in the confidence of affection, Undine returned to the cottage; and now she first realised with her whole heart how little cause she had for regretting what she had left —the crystal palaces of her mysterious father.

Next morning, when Huldbrand awoke from slumber, and perceived that his beautiful wife was not by his side, he began to give way again to his

wild imaginations,—that his marriage, and even the lovely Undine herself, were only shadows without substance—only mere illusions of enchantment. But she entered the door at the same moment, kissed him, seated herself on the bed by his side, and said:

"I have been out somewhat early this morning, to see whether my uncle keeps his word. He has already restored the waters of the flood to his own calm channel, and he now flows through the forest a rivulet as before, in a lonely and dreamlike current. His friends, too, both of the water and the air, have resumed their usual peaceful tenor; all will again proceed with order and tranquillity; and you can travel homeward, without fear of the flood, whenever you choose."

It seemed to the mind of Huldbrand that he must be in some waking dream, so little was he able to understand the nature of his wife's strange relative. Notwithstanding this, he made no remark upon what she had told him, and her surpassing loveliness soon lulled every misgiving and discomfort to rest.

Some time afterward, while he was standing with her before the door, and surveying the verdant point of land, with its boundary of bright waters, such a feeling of bliss came over him in this cradle of his love, that he exclaimed:

"Shall we, then, so early as to-day, begin our journey? Why should we? It is probable that

abroad in the world we shall find no days more delightful than those we have spent in this green isle so secret and so secure. Let us yet see the sun go down here two or three times more."

"Just as my lord wills," replied Undine meekly. "Only we must remember that my foster-parents will, at all events, see me depart with pain; and should they now, for the first time, discover the true soul in me, and how fervently I can now love and honour them, their feeble eyes would surely become blind with weeping. As yet they consider my present quietness and gentleness as of no better promise than they were formerly—like the calm of the lake just while the air remains tranquil—and they will learn soon to cherish a little tree or flower as they have cherished me. Let me not, then, make known to them this newly bestowed, this loving heart, at the very moment they must lose it for this world; and how could I conceal what I have gained, if we continued longer together?"

Huldbrand yielded to her representation, and went to the aged couple to confer with them respecting his journey, on which he proposed to set out that very hour. The priest offered himself as a companion to the young married pair; and, after taking a short farewell, he held the bridle, while the knight lifted his beautiful wife upon his horse; and with rapid step they crossed the dry channel with her toward the forest. Undine wept in silent but intense emotion; the old people, as she moved

away, were more clamorous in the expression of their grief. They appeared to feel, at the moment of separation, all that they were losing in their affectionate foster-daughter.

The three travellers had reached the thickest shades of the forest without interchanging a word. It must have been a fair sight, in that hall of leafy verdure, to see this lovely woman's form sitting on the noble and richly-ornamented steed, on her right hand the venerable priest in the white garb of his order, on her left the blooming young knight, clad in splendid raiment of scarlet, gold, and violet, girt with a sword that flashed in the sun, and attentively walking beside her. Huldbrand had no eyes but for his wife; Undine, who had dried her tears of tenderness, had no eyes but for him; and they soon entered into the still and voiceless converse of looks and gestures, from which, after some time, they were awakened by the low discourse which the priest was holding with a fourth traveller, who had meanwhile joined them unobserved.

He wore a white gown, resembling in form the dress of the priest's order, except that his hood hung very low over his face, and that the whole drapery floated in such wide folds around him as obliged him every moment to gather it up and throw it over his arm, or by some management of this sort to get it out of his way, and still it did not seem in the least to impede his movements. When the young couple became aware of his presence, he was saying :

"And so, venerable sir, many as have been the years I have dwelt here in this forest, I have never received the name of hermit in your sense of the word. For, as I said before, I know nothing of penance, and I think, too, that I have no particular need of it. Do you ask me why I am so attached to the forest? It is because its scenery is so peculiarly picturesque, and affords me so much pastime when, in my floating white garments, I pass through its world of leaves and dusky shadows; —and when a sweet sunbeam glances down upon me at times unexpectedly."

"You are a very singular man," replied the priest, "and I should like to have a more intimate acquaintance with you."

"And who, then, may you be yourself, to pass from one thing to another?" inquired the stranger.

"I am called Father Heilmann," answered the holy man; "and I am from the cloister of Our Lady of the Salutation, beyond the lake."

"Well, well," replied the stranger, "my name is Kühleborn; and were I a stickler for the nice distinctions of rank, I might, with equal propriety, require you to give me the title of noble lord of Kühleborn, or free lord of Kühleborn; for I am as free as the birds in the forest, and, it may be, a trifle more so. For example, I now have something to tell that young lady there." And before they were aware of his purpose, he was on the other side of the priest, close to Undine, and

stretching himself high into the air, in order to whisper something in her ear. But she shrank from him in terror, and exclaimed:

"I have nothing more to do with you."

"Ho, ho," cried the stranger, with a laugh, "you have made a grand marriage indeed, since you no longer know your own relations! Have you no recollection, then, of your uncle Kühleborn, who so faithfully bore you on his back to this region?"

"However that may be," replied Undine, "I entreat you never to appear in my presence again. I am now afraid of you; and will not my husband fear and forsake me, if he sees me associate with such strange company and kindred?"

"You must not forget, my little niece," said Kühleborn, "that I am with you here as a guide; otherwise those madcap spirits of the earth, the gnomes that haunt this forest, would play you some of their mischievous pranks. Let me therefore still accompany you in peace. Even the old priest there had a better recollection of me than you appear to have; for he just now assured me that I seemed to be very familiar to him, and that I must have been with him in the ferry-boat, out of which he tumbled into the waves. He certainly did see me there; for I was no other than the waterspout that tore him out of it, and kept him from sinking while I safely wafted him ashore to your wedding."

Undine and the knight turned their eyes upon Father Heilmann; but he appeared to be moving

forward, just as if he were dreaming or walking in his sleep, and no longer to be conscious of a word that was spoken. Undine then said to Kühleborn: "I already see yonder the end of the forest. We have no further need of your assistance, and nothing now gives us alarm but yourself. I therefore beseech you, by our mutual love and goodwill, to vanish, and allow us to proceed in peace."

Kühleborn seemed to become angry at this: he darted a frightful look at Undine, and grinned fiercely upon her. She shrieked aloud, and called her husband to protect her. The knight sprang round the horse as quick as lightning, and, brandishing his sword, struck at Kühleborn's head. But, instead of severing it from his body, the sword merely flashed through a torrent, which rushed foaming near them from a lofty cliff; and with a splash, which much resembled in sound a burst of laughter, the stream all at once poured upon them, and gave them a thorough wetting. The priest, as if suddenly awaking from a trance, coolly observed: "This is what I have been sometime expecting, because the brook has descended from the steep so close beside us—though at first sight, indeed, it appeared to resemble a man, and to possess the power of speech."

As the waterfall came rushing from its crag, it distinctly uttered these words in Huldbrand's ear: "Rash knight! valiant knight! I am not angry with you; I have no quarrel with you; only con-

THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE

tinue to defend your lovely little wife with the same spirit, you bold knight! you valiant champion!"

After advancing a few steps farther, the travellers came out upon open ground. The imperial city lay bright before them; and the evening sun, which gilded its towers with gold, kindly dried their garments that had been so completely drenched.

ENCHANTED FOREST

The sudden disappearance of the young knight, Huldbrand of Ringstetten, had occasioned much remark in the imperial city, and no small concern amongst those who, as well on account of his expertness in tourney and dance as of his mild and amiable manners, had become attached to him. His attendants were unwilling to quit the place without their master, although not a soul of them had been

courageous enough to follow him into the fearful recesses of the forest. They remained, therefore, at the hostelry, idly hoping, as men are wont to do, and keeping the fate of their lost lord fresh in remembrance by their lamentations.

Now when the violent storms and floods had been observed immediately after his departure, the destruction of the handsome stranger became all but certain; even Bertalda had openly discovered her sorrow, and detested herself for having been the cause of his taking that fatal excursion into the forest. Her foster-parents, the duke and duchess, had meanwhile come to take her away; but Bertalda persuaded them to remain with her until some certain news of Huldbrand should be obtained, whether he were living or dead. She endeavoured also to prevail upon several young knights, who were assiduous in courting her favour, to go in quest of the noble adventurer in the forest. But she refused to pledge her hand as the reward of the enterprise, because she still cherished, it might be, a hope of its being claimed by the returning knight; and no one would consent, for a glove, a riband, or even a kiss, to expose his life to bring back so very dangerous a rival.

When Huldbrand now made his sudden and unexpected appearance, his attendants, the inhabitants of the city, and almost every one, rejoiced. This was not the case with Bertalda; for although it might be quite a welcome event to others that he

brought with him a wife of such exquisite loveliness, and Father Heilmann as a witness of their marriage, Bertalda could not but view the affair with grief and vexation. She had, in truth, become attached to the young knight with her whole soul; and her mourning for his absence, or supposed death, had shown this more than she could now have wished.

But notwithstanding all this, she conducted herself like a wise maiden in circumstances of such delicacy, and lived on the most friendly terms with Undine, whom the whole city looked upon as a princess that Huldbrand had rescued in the forest from some evil enchantment. Whenever anyone questioned either herself or her husband relative to surmises of this nature they had wisdom enough to remain silent, or wit enough to evade the inquiries. The lips of Father Heilmann had been sealed in regard to idle gossip of every kind; and besides, on Huldbrand's arrival, he had immediately returned to his cloister: so that people were obliged to rest contented with their own wild conjectures; and even Bertalda herself ascertained nothing more of the truth than others.

For the rest, Undine daily felt more love for the fair maiden. "We must have been before acquainted with each other," she often used to say to her, "or else there must be some mysterious connection between us, for it is incredible that anyone so perfectly without cause—I mean, without some deep and secret cause—should be so

fondly attached to another as I have been to you from the first moment of our meeting."

And even Bertalda could not deny that she felt a confiding impulse, an attraction of tenderness, toward Undine, much as she deemed this fortunate rival the cause of her bitterest disappointment. Under the influence of this mutual regard, they found means to persuade, the one her foster-parents, and the other her husband, to defer the day of separation to a period more and more remote; nay, more, they had already begun to talk of a plan for Bertalda's accompanying Undine to Castle Ringstetten, near one of the sources of the Danube.

Once on a fine evening they happened to be talking over their scheme just as they passed the high trees that bordered the public walk. The young married pair, though it was somewhat late, had called upon Bertalda to invite her to share their enjoyment; and all three proceeded familiarly up and down beneath the dark blue heaven, not seldom interrupted in their converse by the admiration which they could not but bestow upon the magnificent fountain in the middle of the square, and upon the wonderful rush and shooting upward of its water. All was sweet and soothing to their minds. Among the shadows of the trees stole in glimmerings of light from the adjacent houses. A low murmur as of children at play, and of other persons who were enjoying their walk,

floated around them—they were so alone, and yet sharing so much of social happiness in the bright and stirring world, that whatever had appeared rough by day, now became smooth of its own accord. And the three friends could no longer see the slightest cause for hesitation in regard to Bertalda's taking the journey.

At that instant, while they were just fixing the day of their departure, a tall man approached them from the middle of the square, bowed respectfully to the company, and spoke something in the young bride's ear. Though displeased with the interruption and its cause, she walked aside a few steps with the stranger; and both began to whisper, as it seemed, in a foreign tongue. Huldbrand thought he recognised the strange man of the forest, and he gazed upon him so fixedly that he neither heard nor answered the astonished inquiries of Bertalda. All at once Undine clapped her hands with delight, and turned back from the stranger, laughing: he, frequently shaking his head, retired with a hasty step and discontented air, and descended into the fountain. Huldbrand now felt perfectly certain that his conjecture was correct. But Bertalda asked:

"What, then, dear Undine, did the master of the fountain wish to say to you?"

Undine laughed within herself, and made answer: "The day after to-morrow, my dear child, when the anniversary of your name-day

returns, you shall be informed.". And this was all she could be prevailed upon to disclose. She merely asked Bertalda to dinner on the appointed day, and requested her to invite her foster-parents; and soon afterward they separated.

"Kühleborn?" said Huldbrand to his lovely wife, with an inward shudder when they had taken leave of Bertalda, and were now going home through the darkening streets.

"Yes, it was he," answered Undine; "and he would have wearied me with his foolish warnings. But, in the midst, quite contrary to his intentions, he delighted me with a most welcome piece of news. If you, my dear lord and husband, wish me to acquaint you with it now, you need only command me, and I will freely and from my heart tell you all without reserve. But would you confer upon your Undine a very, very great pleasure, wait till the day after to-morrow, and then you too shall have your share of the surprise."

The knight was quite willing to gratify his wife in what she had asked so sweetly. And even as she was falling asleep, she murmured to herself, with a smile: "How she will rejoice and be astonished at what her master of the fountain has told me!—dear, dear Bertalda!"

The company were sitting at dinner. Bertalda, adorned with jewels and flowers without number, the presents of her foster-parents and friends, and looking like some goddess of spring, sat beside

Undine and Huldbrand at the head of the table. When the sumptuous repast was ended, and the dessert was placed before them, permission was given that the doors should be left open: this was in accordance with the good old custom in Germany, that the common people might see and rejoice in the festivity of their superiors. Among these spectators the servants carried round cake and wine.

Huldbrand and Bertalda waited with secret impatience for the promised explanation, and hardly moved their eyes from Undine. But she still continued silent, and merely smiled to herself with secret and heartfelt satisfaction. All who were made acquainted with the promise she had given could perceive that she was every moment on the point of revealing a happy secret; and yet, as children sometimes delay tasting their choicest dainties, she still withheld the communication. Bertalda and Huldbrand shared the same delightful feeling, while in anxious hope they were expecting the unknown disclosure which they were to receive from the lips of their friend.

At this moment several of the company pressed Undine to sing. This she seemed pleased at; and ordering her lute to be brought, she sang the following words:—

"Morning so bright,
Wild flowers so gay,
Where high grass so dewy
Crowns the wavy lake's border.

On the meadow's verdant bosom
What glimmers there so white?
Have wreaths of snowy blossoms,
Soft-floating, fallen from heaven?

Ah, see! a tender infant!—
It plays with flowers, unwitting;
It strives to grasp morn's golden beams.
O where, sweet stranger, where's your home?
Afar from unknown shores
The waves have wafted hither
This helpless little one.

Nay, clasp not, tender darling,
With tiny hand the flowers!
No hand returns the pressure,
The flowers are strange and mute.

They clothe themselves in beauty,
They breathe a rich perfume:
But cannot fold around you
A mother's loving arms;—
Far, far away that mother's fond embrace.

Life's early dawn just opening faint,
Your eye yet beaming Heaven's own smile,
So soon your tenderest guardians gone;
Severe, poor child, your fate,—
All, all to you unknown.

A noble duke has crossed the mead,
And near you checked his steed's career:
Wonder and pity touch his heart;
With knowledge high, and manners pure,
He rears you,—makes his castle home your own.

How great, how infinite your gain !
Of all the land you bloom the loveliest ;
Yet, ah ! the priceless blessing,
The bliss of parents' fondness,
You left on strands unknown ! "

Undine let fall her lute with a melancholy smile. The eyes of Bertalda's noble foster-parents were filled with tears.

"Ah yes, it was so—such *was* the morning on which I found you, poor orphan ! " cried the duke, with deep emotion ; "the beautiful singer is certainly right : still

'The priceless blessing,
The bliss of parents' fondness,'

it was beyond our power to give you."

"But we must hear, also, what happened to the poor parents," said Undine, as she struck the chords, and sung :—

"Through her chambers roams the mother
Searching, searching everywhere ;
Seeks, and knows not what, with yearning,
Childless house still finding there.

Childless house !—O sound of anguish !
She alone the anguish knows,
There by day who led her dear one,
There who rocked its night-repose.

Beechen buds again are swelling,
Sunshine warms again the shore ;
Ah, fond mother, cease your searching !
Comes the loved and lost no more.

Then when airs of eve are fresh'ning,
Home the father wends his way,
While with smiles his woe he's veiling,
Gushing tears his heart betray.

Well he knows, within his dwelling,
Still as death he'll find the gloom,
Only hear the mother moaning,—
No sweet babe to *smile* him home."

"O, tell me, in the name of Heaven tell me, Undine, where are my parents?" cried the weeping Bertalda. "You certainly know; you must have discovered them, you wonderful being; for otherwise you would never have thus torn my heart. Can they be already here? May I believe it possible?" Her eye glanced rapidly over the brilliant company, and rested upon a lady of high rank who was sitting next to her foster-father.

Then, bending her head, Undine beckoned toward the door, while her eyes overflowed with the sweetest emotion. "Where, then, are the poor parents waiting?" she asked; and the old fisherman, hesitating, advanced with his wife from the crowd of spectators. They looked inquiringly, now at Undine, and now at the beautiful lady who was said to be their daughter.

"It is she! it is she there before you"; exclaimed the restorer of their child, her voice half choked with rapture. And both the aged parents embraced their recovered daughter, weeping aloud and praising God.

But, terrified and indignant, Bertalda tore herself from their arms. Such a discovery was too much for her proud spirit to bear, especially at the moment when she had doubtless expected to see her former splendour increased, and when hope was picturing to her nothing less brilliant than a royal canopy and a crown. It seemed to her as if her rival had contrived all this on purpose to humble her before Huldbrand and the whole world. She reproached Undine; she reviled the old people; and even such offensive words as "deceiver, bribed and perjured impostors," burst from her lips.

The aged wife of the fisherman then said to herself, in a low voice: "Ah, my God, she has become wicked! and yet I feel in my heart that she is my child."

The old fisherman had meanwhile folded his hands, and offered up a silent prayer that she might *not* be his daughter.

Undine, faint and pale as death, turned from the parents to Bertalda, from Bertalda to the parents. She was suddenly cast down from all that heaven of happiness in which she had been dreaming, and plunged into an agony of terror and disappointment, which she had never known even in dreams.

"Have you, then, a soul? Have you indeed a soul, Bertalda?" she cried again and again to her angry friend, as if with vehement effort she would rouse her from a sudden delirium or some distracting dream of night, and restore her to recollection.

But when Bertalda became every moment only

more and more enraged—when the disappointed parents began to weep aloud—and the company, with much warmth of dispute, were espousing opposite sides—she begged, with such earnestness and dignity, for the liberty of speaking in this her husband's hall, that all around her were in an instant hushed to silence. She then advanced to the upper end of the table, where, both humbled and haughty, Bertalda had seated herself, and, while every eye was fastened upon her, spoke in the following manner:—

"My friends, you appear dissatisfied and disturbed; and you are interrupting, with your strife, a festivity I had hoped would bring joy to you and to me. Ah! I knew nothing of your heartless ways of thinking; and never shall I understand them. I am not to blame for the mischief this disclosure has done. Believe me, little as you may imagine this to be the case, it is wholly owing to yourselves. One word more, therefore, is all I have to add; but this is one that must be spoken: —I have uttered nothing but truth. Of the certainty of the fact, I give you the strongest assurance. No other proof can I or will I produce, but this I will affirm in the presence of God. The person who gave me this information was the very same who decoyed the infant Bertalda into the water, and who, after thus taking her from her parents, placed her on the green grass of the meadow, where he knew the duke was to pass."

"She is an enchantress!" cried Bertalda; "a

witch, that has intercourse with evil spirits. She acknowledges it herself."

"Never! I deny it!" replied Undine, while a whole heaven of innocence and truth beamed from her eyes. "I am no witch; look upon me, and say if I am."

"Then she utters both falsehood and folly," cried Bertalda; "and she is unable to prove that I am the child of these low people. My noble parents, I entreat you to take me from this company, and out of this city, where they do nothing but shame me."

But the aged duke, a man of honourable feeling, remained unmoved; and his wife remarked: "We must thoroughly examine into this matter. God forbid that we should move a step from this hall before we do so."

Then the aged wife of the fisherman drew near, made a low obeisance to the duchess, and said: "Noble and pious lady, you have opened my heart. Permit me to tell you, that if this evil-disposed maiden is my daughter, she has a mark like a violet between her shoulders, and another of the same kind on the instep of her left foot. If she will only consent to go out of the hall with me——"

"I will not consent to uncover myself before the peasant woman," interrupted Bertalda, haughtily turning her back upon her.

"But before me you certainly will," replied the duchess, gravely. "You will follow me into that

room, maiden; and the old woman shall go with us."

The three disappeared, and the rest continued where they were, in breathless expectation. In a few minutes the females returned—Bertalda pale as death; and the duchess said: "Justice must be done; I therefore declare that our lady hostess has spoken exact truth. Bertalda is the fisherman's daughter; no further proof is required; and this is all of which, on the present occasion, you need to be informed."

The princely pair went out with their adopted daughter; the fisherman, at a sign from the duke, followed them with his wife. The other guests retired in silence, or suppressing their murmurs; while Undine sank weeping into the arms of Huldbrand.

The lord of Ringstetten would certainly have been more gratified had the events of this day been different; but even such as they now were, he could by no means look upon them as unwelcome, since his lovely wife had shown herself so full of goodness, sweetness, and kindliness.

"If I have given her a soul," he could not help saying to himself, "I have assuredly given her a better one than my own"; and now he only thought of soothing and comforting his weeping wife, and of removing her even so early as the morrow from a place which, after this strange incident, could not fail to be distasteful to her. Yet it is certain that the opinion of the public

concerning her was not changed. As something extraordinary had long before been expected of her, the mysterious discovery of Bertalda's parentage had occasioned little or no surprise; and every one who became acquainted with Bertalda's story, and with the violence of her behaviour on that occasion, was only disgusted and set against her. Of this state of things, however, the knight and his lady were as yet ignorant; besides, whether the public condemned Bertalda or herself, the one view of the affair would have been as distressing to Undine as the other; and thus they came to the conclusion that the wisest course they could take, was to leave behind them the walls of the old city with all the speed in their power.

With the earliest beams of morning, a brilliant carriage for Undine drove up to the door of the inn; the horses of Huldbrand and his attendants stood near, stamping the pavement, impatient to proceed. The knight was leading his beautiful wife from the door, when a fisher-girl came up and met them in the way.

"We have no need of your fish," said Huldbrand, accosting her; "we are at this moment setting out on a journey."

Upon this the fisher-girl began to weep bitterly; and then it was that the young couple first perceived it was Bertalda. They immediately returned with her to their apartment, when she informed them that, owing to her unfeeling and violent

conduct of the preceding day, the duke and duchess had been so displeased with her, as entirely to withdraw from her their protection, though not before giving her a generous portion. The fisherman, too, had received a handsome gift, and had, the evening before, set out with his wife for his peninsula.

"I would have gone with them," she pursued, "but the old fisherman, who is said to be my father——"

"He is, in truth, your father, Bertalda," said Undine, interrupting her. "See, the stranger whom you took for the master of the fountains gave me all the particulars. He wished to dissuade me from taking you with me to Castle Ringstetten, and therefore disclosed to me the whole mystery."

"Well then," continued Bertalda, "my father—if it must needs be so—my father said: 'I will not take you with me until you are changed. If you will venture to come to us alone through the ill-omened forest, that shall be a proof of your having some regard for us. But come not to me as a lady; come merely as a fisher-girl.' I do as he bade me, for since I am abandoned by all the world, I will live and die in solitude, a poor fisher-girl, with parents equally poor. The forest, indeed, appears very terrible to me. Horrible spectres make it their haunt, and I am so fearful. But how can I help it? I have only come here at this early hour to beg the noble lady of Ringstetten to

BERTALDA BURSTS INTO TEARS

pardon my unbecoming behaviour of yesterday. Sweet lady, I have the fullest persuasion that you meant to do me a kindness, but you were not aware how severely you would wound me; and then, in my agony and surprise, so many rash and frantic expressions burst from my lips. Forgive me, ah, forgive me! I am in truth so unhappy already. Only consider what I was but yesterday morning, what I was even at the beginning of your yesterday's festival, and what I am to-day!"

Her words now became inarticulate, lost in a passionate flow of tears, while Undine, bitterly weeping with her, fell upon her neck. So powerful was her emotion, that it was a long time before she could utter a word. At length she said:

"You shall still go with us to Ringstetten; all shall remain just as we lately arranged it; but say 'thou' to me again, and do not call me 'noble lady' any more. Consider, we were changed for each other when we were children; even then we were united by a like fate, and we will strengthen this union with such close affection as no human power shall dissolve. Only first of all you must go with us to Ringstetten. How we shall share all things as sisters, we can talk of after we arrive."

Bertalda looked up to Huldbrand with timid inquiry. He pitied her in her affliction, took her hand, and begged her tenderly to entrust herself to him and his wife.

"We will send a message to your parents," con-

tinued he, "giving them the reason why you have not come";—and he would have added more about his worthy friends of the peninsula, when, perceiving that Bertalda shrank in distress at the mention of them, he refrained. He took her under the arm, lifted her first into the carriage, then Undine, and was soon riding blithely beside them; so persevering was he, too, in urging forward their driver, that in a short time they had left behind them the limits of the city, and a crowd of painful recollections; and now the ladies could take delight in the beautiful country which their progress was continually presenting.

After a journey of some days, they arrived, on a fine evening, at Castle Ringstetten. The young knight, being much engaged with the overseers and menials of his establishment, Undine and Bertalda were left alone. They took a walk upon the high rampart of the fortress, and were charmed with the delightful landscape which the fertile Suabia spread around them. While they were viewing the scene, a tall man drew near, who greeted them with respectful civility, and who seemed to Bertalda much to resemble the master of the city fountains. Still less was the resemblance to be mistaken, when Undine, indignant at his intrusion, waved him off with an air of menace; while he, shaking his head, retreated with rapid strides, as he had formerly done, then glided among the trees of a neighbouring grove and disappeared.

"Do not be terrified, Bertalda," said Undine; "the hateful master of the fountains shall do you no harm this time." And then she related to her the particulars of her history, and who she was herself—how Bertalda had been taken away from the people of the peninsula, and Undine left in her place. This relation at first filled the young maiden with amazement and alarm; she imagined her friend must be seized with a sudden madness. But, from the consistency of her story, she became more and more convinced that all was true, it so well agreed with former occurrences, and still more convinced from that inward feeling with which truth never fails to make itself known to us. She could not but view it as an extraordinary circumstance that she was herself now living, as it were, in the midst of one of those wild tales which she had formerly heard related. She gazed upon Undine with reverence, but could not keep from a shuddering feeling which seemed to come between her and her friend; and she could not but wonder when the knight, at their evening repast, showed himself so kind and full of love towards a being who appeared to her, after the discoveries just made, more to resemble a phantom of the spirit-world than one of the human race.

The writer of this tale, both because it moves

his own heart and he wishes it to move that of others, asks a favour of you, dear reader. Forgive him if he passes over a considerable space of time in a few words, and only tells you generally what therein happened. He knows well that it might be unfolded skilfully, and step by step, how Huldbrand's heart began to turn from Undine and towards Bertalda—how Bertalda met the young knight with ardent love, and how they both looked upon the poor wife as a mysterious being, more to be dreaded than pitied—how Undine wept, and her tears stung the conscience of her husband, without recalling his former love; so that though at times he showed kindness to her, a cold shudder soon forced him to turn from her to his fellow-mortal Bertalda;—all this, the writer knows, might have been drawn out fully, and perhaps it ought to have been. But it would have made him too sad; for he has witnessed such things, and shrinks from recalling even their shadow. Thou knowest, probably, the like feeling, dear reader; for it is the lot of mortal man. Happy art thou if thou hast received the injury, not inflicted it; for in this case it is more blessed to receive than to give. Then only a soft sorrow at such a recollection passes through thy heart, and perhaps a quiet tear trickles down thy cheek over the faded flowers in which thou once so heartily rejoiced. This is enough: we will not pierce our hearts with a thousand

separate stings, but only bear in mind that all happened as I just now said.

Poor Undine was greatly troubled; and the other two were very far from being happy. Bertalda in particular, whenever she was in the slightest degree opposed in her wishes, attributed the cause to the jealousy and oppression of the injured wife. She was therefore daily in the habit of showing a haughty and imperious demeanour, to which Undine yielded with a sad submission; and which was generally encouraged strongly by the now blinded Huldbrand.

What disturbed the inmates of the castle still more, was the endless variety of wonderful apparitions which assailed Huldbrand and Bertalda in the vaulted passages of the building, and of which nothing had ever been heard before within the memory of man. The tall white man, in whom Huldbrand but too plainly recognised Undine's uncle Kühleborn, and Bertalda the spectral master of the fountains, often passed before them with threatening aspect and gestures; more especially, however, before Bertalda, so that, through terror, she had several times already fallen sick, and had, in consequence, frequently thought of quitting the castle. Yet partly because Huldbrand was but too dear to her, and she trusted to her innocence, since

no words of love had passed between them, and partly also because she knew not whither to direct her steps, she lingered where she was.

The old fisherman, on receiving the message from the lord of Ringstetten that Bertalda was his guest, returned answer in some lines almost too illegible to be deciphered, but still the best his advanced age and long disuse of writing permitted him to form.

"I have now become," he wrote, "a poor old widower, for my beloved and faithful wife is dead. But lonely as I now sit in my cottage, I prefer Bertalda's remaining where she is, to her living with me. Only let her do nothing to hurt my dear Undine, else she will have my curse."

The last words of this letter, Bertalda flung to the winds; but the permission to remain from home, which her father had granted her, she remembered and clung to—just as we are all of us wont to do in similar circumstances.

One day, a few moments after Huldbrand had ridden out, Undine called together the domestics of the family, and ordered them to bring a large stone, and carefully to cover with it a magnificent fountain, that was situated in the middle of the castle court. The servants objected that it would oblige them to bring water from the valley below. Undine smiled sadly.

"I am sorry, my friends," replied she, "to increase your labour; I would rather bring up the

water-vessels myself: but this fountain must indeed be closed. Believe me when I say that it must be done, and that only by doing it we can avoid a greater evil."

The domestics were all rejoiced to gratify their gentle mistress; and making no further inquiry, they seized the enormous stone. While they were raising it in their hands, and were now on the point of adjusting it over the fountain, Bertalda came running to the place, and cried, with an air of command, that they must stop; that the water she used, so improving to her complexion, was brought from this fountain, and that she would by no means allow it to be closed.

This time, however, Undine, while she showed her usual gentleness, showed more than her usual resolution: she said it belonged to her, as mistress of the house, to direct the household according to her best judgment; and that she was accountable in this to no one but her lord and husband.

"See, O pray see," exclaimed the dissatisfied and indignant Bertalda, "how the beautiful water is curling and curving, winding and waving there, as if disturbed at being shut out from the bright sunshine, and from the cheerful view of the human countenance, for whose mirror it was created."

In truth the water of the fountain was agitated, and foaming, and hissing in a surprising manner; it seemed as if there were something within possessing life and will, that was struggling to free itself

from confinement. But Undine only the more earnestly urged the accomplishment of her commands. This earnestness was scarcely required. The servants of the castle were as happy in obeying their gentle lady, as in opposing the haughty spirit of Bertalda; and however the latter might scold and threaten, still the stone was in a few minutes lying firm over the opening of the fountain. Undine leaned thoughtfully over it, and wrote with her beautiful fingers on the flat surface. She must, however, have had something very sharp and corrosive in her hand, for when she retired, and the domestics went up to examine the stone, they discovered various strange characters upon it, which none of them had seen there before.

When the knight returned home, toward evening, Bertalda received him with tears, and complaints of Undine's conduct. He cast a severe glance of reproach at his poor wife, and she looked down in distress; yet she said, very calmly:

"My lord and husband, you never reprove even a bond-slave before you hear his defence; how much less, then, your wedded wife!"

"Speak, what moved you to this singular conduct?" said the knight, with a gloomy countenance.

"I could wish to tell you when we are entirely alone," said Undine, with a sigh.

"You can tell me equally well in the presence of Bertalda," he replied.

"Yes, if you command me," said Undine; "but do not command me—pray, pray do not!"

She looked so humble, affectionate, and obedient, that the heart of the knight was touched and softened, as if it felt the influence of a ray from better times. He kindly took her arm within his, and led her to his apartment, where she spoke as follows:—

"You already know something, my beloved lord, of Kühleborn, my evil-disposed uncle, and have often felt displeasure at meeting him in the passages of this castle. Several times has he terrified Bertalda even to swooning. He does this because he possesses no soul, being a mere elemental mirror of the outward world, while of the world within he can give no reflection. Then, too, he sometimes observes that you are displeased with me, that in my childish weakness I weep at this, and that Bertalda, it may be, laughs at the same moment. Hence it is that he imagines all is wrong with us, and in various ways mixes with our circle unbidden. What do I gain by reproving him, by showing displeasure, and sending him away? He does not believe a word I say. His poor nature has no idea that the joys and sorrows of love have so sweet a resemblance, and are so intimately connected that no power on earth is able to separate them. A smile shines in the midst of tears, and a smile calls forth tears from their dwelling-place."

She looked up at Huldbrand, smiling and weep-

versity of Illinois.

ing, and he again felt within his heart all the magic of his former love. She perceived it, and pressed him more tenderly to her, while with tears of joy she went on thus:

"When the disturber of our peace would not be dismissed with words, I was obliged to shut the door upon him; and the only entrance by which he has access to us is that fountain. His connection with the other water-spirits here in this region is cut off by the valleys that border upon us; and his kingdom recommences farther off on the Danube, in whose tributary streams some of his good friends have their abode. For this reason I caused the stone to be placed over the opening of the fountain, and inscribed characters upon it, which baffle all the efforts of my suspicious uncle; so that he now has no power of intruding either upon you, or me, or Bertalda. Human beings, it is true, notwithstanding the characters I have inscribed there, are able to raise the stone without any extraordinary trouble; there is nothing to prevent them. If you choose, therefore, remove it, according to Bertalda's desire; but she assuredly knows not what she asks. The rude Kühleborn looks with peculiar ill-will upon her; and should those things come to pass that he has predicted to me, and which may happen without your meaning any evil, ah! dearest, even you yourself would be exposed to peril."

Huldbrand felt the generosity of his gentle wife

in the depth of his heart, since she had been so active in confining her formidable defender, and even at the very moment she was reproached for it by Bertalda. He pressed her in his arms with the tenderest affection and said, with emotion:

"The stone shall remain unmoved; all remains, and ever shall remain, just as you choose to have it, my sweetest Undine!"

At these long-withheld expressions of tenderness, she returned his caresses with lowly delight, and at length said: "My dearest husband, since you are so kind and indulgent to-day, may I venture to ask a favour of you? See now, it is with you as with summer. Even amid its highest splendour, summer puts on the flaming and thundering crown of glorious tempests, in which it strongly resembles a king and god on earth. You, too, are sometimes terrible in your rebukes; your eyes flash lightning, while thunder resounds in your voice; and although this may be quite becoming to you, I in my folly cannot but sometimes weep at it. But never, I entreat you, behave thus toward me on a river, or even when we are near any water. For if you should, my relations would acquire a right over me. They would inexorably tear me from you in their fury, because they would conceive that one of their race was injured; and I should be compelled, as long as I lived, to dwell below in the crystal palaces, and never dare ascend to you again; or should they send me up to you!—

O God! that would be far worse still. No, no, my beloved husband; let it not come to that, if your poor Undine is dear to you."

He solemnly promised to do as she desired, and, inexpressibly happy and full of affection, the married pair returned from the apartment. At this very moment, Bertalda came with some work-people whom she had meanwhile ordered to attend her, and said with a fretful air, which she had assumed of late:

"Well, now the secret consultation is at an end, the stone may be removed. Go out, workmen, and see to it."

The knight, however, highly resenting her impertinence, said, in brief and very decisive terms: "The stone remains where it is!" He reproved Bertalda also for the vehemence that she had shown towards his wife. Whereupon the workmen, smiling with secret satisfaction, withdrew; while Bertalda, pale with rage, hurried away to her room.

When the hour of supper came, Bertalda was waited for in vain. They sent for her; but the domestic found her apartments empty, and brought back with him only a sealed letter, addressed to the knight. He opened it in alarm, and read:

"I feel with shame that I am only the daughter of a poor fisherman. That I for one moment forgot this, I will make expiation in the miserable hut of my parents. Farewell to you and your beautiful wife!"

Undine was troubled at heart. With eagerness she entreated Huldbrand to hasten after their friend, who had flown, and bring her back with him. Alas! she had no occasion to urge him. His passion for Bertalda again burst forth with vehemence. He hurried round the castle, inquiring whether any one had seen which way the fair fugitive had gone. He could gain no information; and was already in the court on his horse, determining to take at a venture the road by which he had conducted Bertalda to the castle, when there appeared a page, who assured him that he had met the lady on the path to the Black Valley. Swift as an arrow, the knight sprang through the gate in the direction pointed out, without hearing Undine's voice of agony, as she cried after him from the window:

"To the Black Valley? Oh, not there! Huldbrand, not there! Or if you will go, for Heaven's sake take me with you!"

But when she perceived that all her calling was of no avail, she ordered her white palfrey to be instantly saddled, and followed the knight, without permitting a single servant to accompany her.

The Black Valley lies secluded far among the mountains. What its present name may be I am unable to say. At the time of which I am speaking, the country-people gave it this appellation from the deep obscurity produced by the shadows of lofty trees, more especially by a crowded growth

of firs that covered this region of moorland. Even the brook, which bubbled between the rocks, assumed the same dark hue, and showed nothing of that cheerful aspect which streams are wont to wear that have the blue sky immediately over them.

It was now the dusk of evening; and between the heights it had become extremely wild and gloomy. The knight, in great anxiety, skirted the border of the brook. He was at one time fearful that, by delay, he should allow the fugitive to advance too far before him; and then again, in his too eager rapidity, he was afraid he might somewhere overlook and pass her by, should she be desirous of concealing herself from his search. He had in the meantime penetrated pretty far into the valley, and might hope soon to overtake the maiden, provided he were pursuing the right track. The fear, indeed, that he might not as yet have gained it, made his heart beat with more and more anxiety. In the stormy night which was now approaching, and which always fell more fearfully over this valley, where would the delicate Bertalda shelter herself should he fail to find her? At last, while these thoughts were darting across his mind, he saw something white glimmer through the branches on the ascent of the mountain. He thought he recognised Bertalda's robe; and he directed his course toward it. But his horse refused to go forward; he reared with a fury so

uncontrollable, and his master was so unwilling to lose a moment, that (especially as he saw the thickets were altogether impassable on horseback) he dismounted, and, having fastened his snorting steed to an elm, worked his way with caution through the matted underwood. The branches, moistened by the cold drops of the evening dew, struck against his forehead and cheeks; distant thunder muttered from the farther side of the mountains; and everything put on so strange an appearance, that he began to feel a dread of the white figure, which now lay at a short distance from him upon the ground. Still, he could see distinctly that it was a female, either asleep or in a swoon, and dressed in long white garments such as Bertalda had worn the past day. Approaching quite near to her, he made a rustling with the branches and a ringing with his sword; but she did not move.

"Bertalda!" he cried, at first low, then louder and louder; yet she heard him not. At last, when he uttered the dear name with an energy yet more powerful, a hollow echo from the mountain-summits around the valley returned the deadened sound, "Bertalda!" Still the sleeper continued insensible. He stooped down; but the duskiness of the valley, and the obscurity of twilight would not allow him to distinguish her features. While, with painful uncertainty, he was bending over her, a flash of lightning suddenly shot across the valley.

By this stream of light he saw a frightfully distorted visage close to his own, and a hoarse voice reached his ear:

"You enamoured swain, give me a kiss!" Huldbrand sprang upon his feet with a cry of horror; and the hideous figure rose with him.

"Go home!" it cried with a deep murmur: "the fiends are abroad. Go home! or I have you!" And it stretched toward him its long white arms.

"Malicious Kühleborn!" exclaimed the knight, with restored energy; "if Kühleborn you are, what business have you here?—what's your will, you goblin? There, take your kiss!" And in fury he struck his sword at the form. But it vanished like vapour; and a rush of water, which wetted him through and through, left him in no doubt with what foe he had been engaged.

"He wishes to frighten me back from my pursuit of Bertalda," said he to himself. "He imagines that I shall be terrified at his senseless tricks, and resign the poor distressed maiden to his power, so that he can wreak his vengeance upon her at will. But that he shall not, weak spirit of the flood! What the heart of man can do, when it exerts the full force of its will and of its noblest powers, the poor goblin cannot fathom."

He felt the truth of his words, and that they had inspired his heart with fresh courage. Fortune, too, appeared to favour him; for, before reaching

his fastened steed, he distinctly heard the voice of Bertalda, weeping not far before him, amid the roar of the thunder and the tempest, which every moment increased. He flew swiftly toward the sound, and found the trembling maiden, just as she was attempting to climb the steep, hoping to escape from the dreadful darkness of this valley. He drew near her with expressions of love; and bold and proud as her resolution had so lately been, she now felt nothing but joy that the man whom she so passionately loved should rescue her from this frightful solitude, and thus call her back to the joyful life in the castle. She followed almost unresisting, but so spent with fatigue, that the knight was glad to bring her to his horse, which he now hastily unfastened from the elm, in order to lift the fair wanderer upon him, and then to lead him carefully by the reins through the uncertain shades of the valley.

But, owing to the wild apparition of Kühleborn, the horse had become wholly unmanageable. Rearing and wildly snorting as he was, the knight must have used uncommon effort to mount the beast himself; to place the trembling Bertalda upon him was impossible. They were compelled, therefore, to return home on foot. While with one hand the knight drew the steed after him by the bridle, he supported the tottering Bertalda with the other. She exerted all the strength in her power in order to escape speedily from this vale of terrors.

But weariness weighed her down like lead; and all her limbs trembled, partly in consequence of what she had suffered from the extreme terror which Kühleborn had already caused her, and partly from her present fear at the roar of the tempest and thunder amid the mountain-forest.

At last she slid from the arm of the knight; and sinking upon the moss, she said: "Only let me lie here, my noble lord. I suffer the punishment due to my folly; and I must perish here through faintness and dismay."

"Never, gentle lady, will I leave you," cried Huldbrand, vainly trying to restrain the furious animal he was leading, for the horse was all in a foam, and began to chafe more ungovernably than before, till the knight was glad to keep him at such a distance from the exhausted maiden as to save her from a new alarm. But hardly had he withdrawn five steps with the frantic steed when she began to call after him in the most sorrowful accents, fearful that he would actually leave her in this horrible wilderness. He was at a loss what course to take. He would gladly have given the enraged beast his liberty; he would have let him rush away amid the night and exhaust his fury, had he not feared that in this narrow defile his iron-shod hoofs might come thundering over the very spot where Bertalda lay.

In this extreme peril and embarrassment he heard with delight the rumbling wheels of a waggon

as it came slowly descending the stony way behind them. He called out for help; answer was returned in the deep voice of a man, bidding them have patience, but promising assistance; and two grey horses soon after shone through the bushes, and near them their driver in the white frock of a carter; and next appeared a great sheet of white linen, with which the goods he seemed to be conveying were covered. The greys, in obedience to a shout from their master, stood still. He came up to the knight, and aided him in checking the fury of the foaming charger.

"I know well enough," said he, "what is the matter with the brute. The first time I travelled this way my horses were just as wilful and headstrong as yours. The reason is, there is a water-spirit haunts this valley—and a wicked wight they say he is—who takes delight in mischief and witcheries of this sort. But I have learned a charm; and if you will let me whisper it in your horse's ear, he will stand just as quiet as my silver greys there."

"Try your luck, then, and help us as quickly as possible!" said the impatient knight.

Upon this the waggoner drew down the head of the rearing courser close to his own, and spoke some words in his ear. The animal instantly stood still and subdued; only his quick panting and smoking sweat showed his recent violence.

Huldbrand had little time to inquire by what

means this had been effected. He agreed with the man that he should take Bertalda in his waggon, where, as he said, a quantity of soft cotton was stowed, and he might in this way convey her to Castle Ringstetten, the knight could accompany them on horseback. But the horse appeared to be too much exhausted to carry his master so far. Seeing this, the man advised him to mount the waggon with Bertalda. The horse could be attached to it behind.

"It is down hill," said he, "and the load for my greys will therefore be light."

The knight accepted his offer, and entered the waggon with Bertalda. The horse followed patiently after, while the waggoner, sturdy and attentive, walked beside them.

Amid the silence and deepening obscurity of the night, the tempest sounding more and more remote, in the comfortable feeling of their security, a confidential conversation arose between Huldbrand and Bertalda. He reproached her in the most flattering words for her resentful flight. She excused herself with humility and feeling; and from every tone of her voice it shone out, like a lamp guiding to the beloved through night and darkness, that Huldbrand was still dear to her. The knight felt the *sense* of her words rather than heard the words themselves, and answered simply to this sense.

Then the waggoner suddenly shouted, with a

startling voice: "Up, my greys, up with your feet! Hey, now together!—show your spirit!—remember who you are!"

The knight bent over the side of the waggon, and saw that the horses had stepped into the midst of a foaming stream, and were, indeed, almost swimming, while the wheels of the waggon were rushing round and flashing like mill-wheels; and the waggoner had got on before, to avoid the swell of the flood.

"What sort of a road is this? It leads into the middle of the stream!" cried Huldbrand to his guide.

"Not at all, sir," returned he, with a laugh; "it is just the contrary. The stream is running in the middle of our road. Only look about you, and see how all is overflowed!"

The whole valley, in fact, was in commotion, as the waters, suddenly raised and visibly rising, swept over it.

"It is Kühleborn, that evil water-spirit, who wishes to drown us!" exclaimed the knight. "Have you no charm of protection against him, friend?"

"I have one," answered the waggoner; "but I cannot and must not make use of it before you know who I am."

"Is this a time for riddles?" cried the knight. "The flood is every moment rising higher; and what does it concern *me* to know who *you* are?"

"But mayhap it does concern you, though," said the guide; "for *I* am Kühleborn."

Thus speaking, he thrust his head into the waggon, and laughed with a distorted visage. But the waggon remained a waggon no longer; the grey horses were horses no longer; all was transformed to foam—all sank into the waters that rushed and hissed around them; while the waggoner himself, rising in the form of a gigantic wave, dragged the vainly-struggling courser under the waters, then rose again huge as a liquid tower, swept over the heads of the floating pair, and was on the point of burying them irrecoverably beneath it. Then the soft voice of Undine was heard through the uproar; the moon emerged from the clouds; and by its light Undine was seen on the heights above the valley. She rebuked, she threatened the floods below her. The menacing and tower-like billow vanished, muttering and murmuring; the waters gently flowed away under the beams of the moon; while Undine, like a hovering white dove, flew down from the hill, raised the knight and Bertalda, and bore them to a green spot, where, by her earnest efforts, she soon restored them and dispelled their terrors. She then assisted Bertalda to mount the white palfrey on which she had herself been borne to the valley; and thus all three returned homeward to Castle Ringstetten.

After this last adventure they lived at the castle

THE ADVENTURE IN THE BLACK VALLEY

undisturbed and in peaceful enjoyment. The knight was more and more impressed with the heavenly goodness of his wife, which she had so nobly shown by her instant pursuit, and by the rescue she had effected in the Black Valley, where the power of Kühleborn again commenced. Undine herself enjoyed that peace and security which never fails the soul as long as it knows distinctly that it is on the right path; and besides, in the newly-awakened love and regard of her husband, a thousand gleams of hope and joy shone upon her.

Bertalda, on the other hand, showed herself grateful, humble, and timid, without taking to herself any merit for so doing. Whenever Huldbrand or Undine began to explain to her their reason for covering the fountain, or their adventures in the Black Valley, she would earnestly entreat them to spare her the recital, for the recollection of the fountain occasioned her too much shame, and that of the Black Valley too much terror. She learnt nothing more about either of them; and what would she have gained from more knowledge? Peace and joy had visibly taken up their abode at Castle Ringstetten. They enjoyed their present blessings in perfect security, and now imagined that life could produce nothing but pleasant flowers and fruits.

In this happiness winter came and passed away; and spring, with its foliage of tender green, and

its heaven of softest blue, succeeded, to gladden the hearts of the three inmates of the castle. The season was in harmony with their minds, and their minds imparted their own hues to the season. What wonder, then, that its storks and swallows inspired them also with a disposition to travel? On a bright morning, while they were wandering down to one of the sources of the Danube, Huldbrand spoke of the magnificence of this noble stream, how it continued swelling as it flowed through countries enriched by its waters, with what splendour Vienna rose and sparkled on its banks, and how it grew lovelier and more imposing throughout its progress.

"It must be glorious to trace its course down to Vienna!" Bertalda exclaimed, with warmth; but immediately resuming the humble and modest demeanour she had recently shown, she paused and blushed in silence.

This much moved Undine; and with the liveliest wish to gratify her friend, she said, "What hinders our taking this little voyage?"

Bertalda leapt up with delight, and the two friends at the same moment began painting this enchanting voyage on the Danube in the most brilliant colours. Huldbrand, too, agreed to the project with pleasure; only he once whispered, with something of alarm, in Undine's ear—

"But at that distance Kühleborn becomes possessed of his power again!"

"Let him come, let him come," she answered with a laugh; "I shall be there, and he dares do none of his mischief in my presence."

Thus was the last impediment removed. They prepared for the expedition, and soon set out upon it with lively spirits and the brightest hopes.

But be not surprised, O man, if events almost always happen very differently from what you expect. That malicious power which lies in ambush for our destruction delights to lull its chosen victim asleep with sweet songs and golden delusions; while, on the other hand, the messenger of Heaven often strikes sharply at our door, to alarm and awaken us.

During the first days of their passage down the Danube they were unusually happy. The farther they advanced upon the waters of this proud river, the fairer became the landscape. But amid scenes otherwise most delicious, and from which they had promised themselves the purest delight, the stubborn Kühleborn, dropping all disguise, began to show his power of annoying them. He had no other means of doing this, indeed, than by tricks—for Undine often rebuked the swelling waves or the contrary winds, and then the insolence of the enemy was instantly humbled and subdued; but his attacks were renewed, and Undine's reproofs again became necessary, so that the pleasure of the fellow-travellers was completely destroyed. The boat-

men, too, were continually whispering to one another in dismay and eyeing their three superiors with distrust, while even the servants began to form still more dismal surmises, and to watch their master and mistress with looks of suspicion.

Huldbrand often said in his own mind, "This comes when like marries not like—when a man forms an unnatural union with a sea-maiden." Excusing himself, as we all love to do, he would add: "I did not, in fact, know that she *was* a maid of the sea. It is my misfortune that my steps are haunted and disturbed by the wild humours of her kindred, but it is not my crime."

By reflections like these, he felt himself in some measure strengthened; but, on the other hand, he felt the more ill-humour, almost dislike, towards Undine. He would look angrily at her, and the unhappy wife but too well understood his meaning. One day, grieved by this unkindness, as well as exhausted by her unremitted exertions to frustrate the artifices of Kühleborn, she, toward evening, fell into a deep slumber, rocked and soothed by the gentle motion of the bark. But hardly had she closed her eyes when every person in the boat, in whatever direction he might look, saw the head of a man, frightful beyond imagination: each head rose out of the waves, not like that of a person swimming, but quite perpendicular, as if firmly fastened to the watery mirror, and yet moving on with the bark. Every one

wished to show to his companion what terrified himself, and each perceived the same expression of horror on the face of the other, only hands and eyes were directed to a different quarter, as if to a point where the monster, half laughing and half threatening, rose opposite to each.

When, however, they wished to make one another understand the sight, and all cried out, "Look there!" "No, there!" the frightful heads all became visible to each, and the whole river around the boat swarmed with the most horrible faces. All raised a scream of terror at the sight, and Undine startled from sleep. As she opened her eyes, the deformed visages disappeared. But Huldbrand was made furious by so many hideous visions. He would have burst out in wild imprecations, had not Undine with the meekest looks and gentlest tone of voice said—

"For God's sake, my husband, do not express displeasure against me here—we are on the water."

The knight was silent, and sat down absorbed in deep thought. Undine whispered in his ear, "Would it not be better, my love, to give up this foolish voyage, and return to Castle Ringstetten in peace?"

But Huldbrand murmured wrathfully: "So I must become a prisoner in my own castle, and not be allowed to breathe a moment but while the fountain is covered? Would to Heaven that your cursed kindred——"

Then Undine pressed her fair hand on his lips caressingly. He said no more; but in silence pondered on all that Undine had before said.

Bertalda, meanwhile, had given herself up to a crowd of thronging thoughts. Of Undine's origin she knew a good deal, but not the whole; and the terrible Kühleborn especially remained to her an awful, an impenetrable mystery—never, indeed, had she once heard his name. Musing upon these wondrous things, she unclasped, without being fully conscious of what she was doing, a golden necklace, which Huldbrand, on one of the preceding days of their passage, had bought for her of a travelling trader; and she was now letting it float in sport just over the surface of the stream, while in her dreamy mood she enjoyed the bright reflection it threw on the water, so clear beneath the glow of evening. That instant a huge hand flashed suddenly up from the Danube, seized the necklace in its grasp, and vanished with it beneath the flood. Bertalda shrieked aloud, and a scornful laugh came pealing up from the depth of the river.

The knight could now restrain his wrath no longer. He started up, poured forth a torrent of reproaches, heaped curses upon all who interfered with his friends and troubled his life, and dared them all, water-spirits or mermaids, to come within the sweep of his sword.

Bertalda, meantime, wept for the loss of the

ornament so very dear to her heart, and her tears were to Huldbrand as oil poured upon the flame of his fury; while Undine held her hand over the side of the boat, dipping it in the waves, softly murmuring to herself, and only at times interrupting her strange mysterious whisper to entreat her husband—

"Do not reprove me here, beloved; blame all others as you will, but not me. You know why!" And in truth, though he was trembling with excess of passion, he kept himself from any word directly against her.

She then brought up in her wet hand, which she had been holding under the waves, a coral necklace, of such exquisite beauty, such sparkling brilliancy, as dazzled the eyes of all who beheld it. "Take this," said she, holding it out kindly to Bertalda, "I have ordered it to be brought to make some amends for your loss; so do not grieve any more, poor child."

But the knight rushed between them, and snatching the beautiful ornament out of Undine's hand, hurled it back into the flood; and, mad with rage, exclaimed: "So, then, you have still a connection with them! In the name of all witches go and remain among them with your presents, you sorceress, and leave us human beings in peace!"

With fixed but streaming eyes, poor Undine gazed on him, her hand still stretched out, just as when she had so lovingly offered her brilliant gift

UNDINE DISAPPEARS

to Bertalda. She then began to weep more and more, as if her heart would break, like an innocent tender child, cruelly aggrieved. At last, wearied out, she said: "Farewell, dearest, farewell. They shall do you no harm; only remain true, that I may have power to keep them from you. But I must go hence! go hence even in this early youth! Oh, woe, woe! what have you done! Oh, woe, woe!"

INTO THE DANUBE

And she vanished over the side of the boat. Whether she plunged into the stream, or whether, like water melting into water, she flowed away with it, they knew not—her disappearance was like both and neither. But she was lost in the Danube, instantly and completely; only little waves were yet whispering and sobbing around the boat, and

they could almost be heard to say, "Oh, woe, woe! Ah, remain true! Oh, woe!"

But Huldbrand, in a passion of burning tears, threw himself upon the deck of the bark; and a deep swoon soon wrapped the wretched man in a blessed forgetfulness of misery.

Shall we call it a good or an evil thing, that our mourning has no long duration? I mean that deep mourning which comes from the very well-springs of our being, which so becomes one with the lost objects of our love that we hardly realise their loss, while our grief devotes itself religiously to the honouring of their image until we reach that bourne which they have already reached!

Truly all good men observe in a degree this religious devotion; but yet it soon ceases to be that first deep grief. Other and new images throng in, until, to our sorrow, we experience the vanity of all earthly things. Therefore I must say: Alas, that our mourning should be of such short duration!

The lord of Ringstetten experienced this; but whether for his good, we shall discover in the sequel of this history. At first he could do nothing but weep—weep as bitterly as the poor gentle Undine had wept when he snatched out of her hand that brilliant ornament, with which she so kindly wished to make amends for Bertalda's loss. And then he stretched his hand out, as she had done, and wept again like her, with renewed violence. He cherished a secret hope, that even

the springs of life would at last become exhausted by weeping. And has not the like thought passed through the minds of many of us with a painful pleasure in times of sore affliction? Bertalda wept with him; and they lived together a long while at the castle of Ringstetten in undisturbed quiet, honouring the memory of Undine, and having almost wholly forgotten their former attachment. And therefore the good Undine, about this time, often visited Huldbrand's dreams: she soothed him with soft and affectionate caresses, and then went away again, weeping in silence; so that when he awoke, he sometimes knew not how his cheeks came to be so wet—whether it was caused by *her* tears, or only by his own.

But as time advanced, these visions became less frequent, and the sorrow of the knight less keen; still he might never, perhaps, have entertained any other wish than thus quietly to think of Undine, and to speak of her, had not the old fisherman arrived unexpectedly at the castle, and earnestly insisted on Bertalda's returning with him as his child. He had received information of Undine's disappearance; and he was not willing to allow Bertalda to continue longer at the castle with the widowed knight. "For," said he, "whether my daughter loves me or not is at present what I care not to know; but her good name is at stake: and where that is the case, nothing else may be thought of."

This resolution of the old fisherman, and the fearful solitude that, on Bertalda's departure, threatened to oppress the knight in every hall and passage of the deserted castle, brought to light what had disappeared in his sorrow for Undine,—I mean, his attachment to the fair Bertalda; and this he made known to her father.

The fisherman had many objections to make to the proposed marriage. The old man had loved Undine with exceeding tenderness, and it was doubtful to his mind that the mere disappearance of his beloved child could be properly viewed as her death. But were it even granted that her corpse were lying stiff and cold at the bottom of the Danube, or swept away by the current to the ocean, still Bertalda had had some share in her death; and it was unfitting for her to step into the place of the poor injured wife. The fisherman, however, had felt a strong regard also for the knight: this and the entreaties of his daughter, who had become much more gentle and respectful, as well as her tears for Undine, all exerted their influence; and he must at last have been forced to give up his opposition, for he remained at the castle without objection, and a messenger was sent off express to Father Heilmann, who in former and happier days had united Undine and Huldbrand, requesting him to come and perform the ceremony at the knight's second marriage.

Hardly had the holy man read through the letter

from the lord of Ringstetten, ere he set out upon the journey, and made much greater dispatch on his way to the castle than the messenger from it had made in reaching him. Whenever his breath failed him in his rapid progress, or his old limbs ached with fatigue, he would say to himself:

"Perhaps I shall be able to prevent a sin; then sink not, withered body, before I arrive at the end of my journey!" And with renewed vigour he pressed forward, hurrying on without rest or repose, until, late one evening, he entered the shady court-yard of the castle of Ringstetten.

The betrothed were sitting side by side under the trees, and the aged fisherman in a thoughtful mood sat near them. The moment they saw Father Heilmann, they rose with a spring of joy and pressed round him with eager welcome. But he in a few words, asked the bridegroom to return with him into the castle; and when Huldbrand stood mute with surprise, and delayed complying with his earnest request, the pious priest said to him—

"I do not know why I should want to speak to you in private; what I have to say as much concerns Bertalda and the fisherman as yourself; and what we must at some time hear, it is best to hear as soon as possible. Are you, then, so very certain, Knight Huldbrand, that your first wife is actually dead? I can hardly think it. I will say nothing, indeed, of the mysterious state in which she may be now existing; I know nothing of it with certainty.

But that she was a most devoted and faithful wife is beyond all dispute. And for fourteen nights past, she has appeared to me in a dream, standing at my bedside wringing her tender hands in anguish, and sighing out, 'Ah, prevent him, dear father! I am still living! Ah, save his life! Ah, save his soul!'

"I did not understand what this vision of the night could mean, then came your messenger; and I have now hastened hither, not to unite, but, as I hope, to separate what ought not to be joined together. Leave her, Huldbrand! leave him, Bertalda! He still belongs to another; and do you not see on his pale cheek his grief for his lost wife? That is not the look of a bridegroom; and the spirit says to me, that 'if you do not leave him you will never be happy!'"

The three felt in their inmost hearts that Father Heilmann spoke the truth; but they would not believe it. Even the old fisherman was so infatuated, that he thought it could not be otherwise than as they had latterly settled amongst themselves. They all, therefore, with a determined and gloomy eagerness, struggled against the representations and warnings of the priest, until, shaking his head and oppressed with sorrow, he finally quitted the castle, not choosing to accept their offered shelter even for a single night, or indeed so much as to taste a morsel of the refreshment they brought him. Huldbrand persuaded himself, however, that

the priest was a mere visionary; and sent at daybreak to a monk of the nearest monastery, who, without scruple, promised to perform the ceremony in a few days.

It was between night and dawn of day that Huldbrand was lying on his couch, half waking and half sleeping. Whenever he attempted to compose himself to sleep, a terror came upon him and scared him, as if his slumbers were haunted with spectres. But he made an effort to rouse himself fully. He felt fanned as by the wings of a swan, and lulled as by the murmuring of waters, till in sweet confusion of the senses he sank back into his state of half-consciousness.

At last, however, he must have fallen soundly asleep; for he seemed to be lifted up by wings of the swans, and to be wafted far away over land and sea, while their music swelled on his ear most sweetly. "The music of the swan! the song of the swan!" he could not but repeat to himself every moment; "is it not a sure foreboding of death?" Probably, however, it had yet another meaning. All at once he seemed to be hovering over the Mediterranean Sea. A swan sang melodiously in his ear, that this *was* the Mediterranean Sea. And while he was looking down upon the waves, they became transparent as crystal, so that he could see through them to the very bottom.

At this a thrill of delight shot through him, for he could see Undine where she was sitting beneath

the clear crystal dome. It is true she was weeping very bitterly, and looked much sadder than in those happy days when they lived together at the castle of Ringstetten, both on their arrival and afterward, just before they set out upon their fatal passage down the Danube. The knight could not help thinking upon all this with deep emotion, but it did not appear that Undine was aware of his presence.

Kühleborn had meanwhile approached her, and was about to reprove her for weeping, when she drew herself up, and looked upon him with an air so majestic and commanding, that he almost shrank back.

"Although I now dwell here beneath the waters," said she, "yet I have brought my soul with me. And therefore I may weep, little as you can know what such tears are. They are blessed, as everything is blessed to one gifted with a true soul."

He shook his head incredulously; and after some thought, replied, "And yet, niece, you are subject to our laws, as a being of the same nature with ourselves; and should *he* prove unfaithful to you and marry again, you are obliged to take away his life."

"He remains a widower to this very hour," replied Undine; "and I am still dear to his sorrowful heart."

"He is, however, betrothed," said Kühleborn, with a laugh of scorn; "and let only a few days wear away, and then comes the priest with his nuptial blessing; and then you must go up to the death of the husband with two wives."

WHAT HULDBRAND SAW IN HIS DREAM

"I have not the power," returned Undine, with a smile. "I have sealed up the fountain securely against myself and all of my race."

"Still, should he leave his castle," said Kühleborn, "or should he once allow the fountain to be uncovered, what then? for he thinks little enough of these things."

"For that very reason," said Undine, still smiling amid her tears, "for that very reason he is at this moment hovering in spirit over the Mediterranean Sea, and dreaming of the warning which our discourse gives him. I thoughtfully planned all this."

That instant, Kühleborn, inflamed with rage, looked up at the knight, wrathfully threatened him, stamped on the ground, and then shot like an arrow beneath the waves. He seemed to swell in his fury to the size of a whale. Again the swans began to sing, to wave their wings and fly; the knight seemed to soar away over mountains and streams, and at last to alight at Castle Ringstetten, and to awake on his couch.

Upon his couch he actually did awake; and his attendant entering at the same moment, informed him that Father Heilmann was still lingering in the neighbourhood; that he had the evening before met with him in the forest, where he was sheltering himself under a hut, which he had formed by interweaving the branches of trees, and covering them with moss and fine brushwood; and that to the question, "What he was doing there, since he

would not give the marriage blessing?" his answer was—

"There are many other blessings than those given at marriages; and though I did not come to officiate at the wedding, I may still officiate at a very different solemnity. All things have their seasons; we must be ready for them all. Besides, marrying and mourning are by no means so very unlike; as every one not wilfully blinded must know full well."

The knight made many bewildered reflections on these words and on his dream. But it is very difficult to give up a thing which we have once looked upon as certain; so all continued as had been arranged previously.

Should I relate to you how passed the marriage-feast at Castle Ringstetten, it would be as if you saw a heap of bright and pleasant things, but all overspread with a black mourning crape, through whose darkening veil their brilliancy would appear but a mockery of the nothingness of all earthly joys.

It was not that any spectral delusion disturbed the scene of festivity; for the castle, as we well know, had been secured against the mischief of water-spirits. But the knight, the fisherman, and all the guests were unable to banish the feeling that the chief personage of the feast was still wanting, and that this chief personage could be no other than the gentle and beloved Undine.

Whenever a door was heard to open, all eyes

were involuntarily turned in that direction: and if it was nothing but the steward with new dishes, or the cup-bearer with a supply of wine of higher flavour than the last, they again looked down in sadness and disappointment, while the flashes of wit and merriment which had been passing at times from one to another, were extinguished by tears of mournful remembrance.

The bride was the least thoughtful of the company, and therefore the most happy; but even to her it sometimes seemed strange that she should be sitting at the head of the table, wearing a green wreath and gold-embroidered robe, while Undine was lying a corpse, stiff and cold at the bottom of the Danube, or carried out by the current into the ocean. For ever since her father had suggested something of this sort, his words were continually sounding in her ear; and this day in particular, they would neither fade from her memory, nor yield to other thoughts.

Evening had scarcely arrived, when the company returned to their homes; not dismissed by the impatience of the bridegroom, as wedding-parties are sometimes broken up, but constrained solely by heavy sadness and forebodings of evil. Bertalda retired with her maidens, and the knight with his attendants, to undress; but there was no gay laughing company of bridesmaids and bridesmen at this mournful festival.

Bertalda wished to awaken more cheerful

thoughts; she ordered her maidens to spread before her a brilliant set of jewels, a present from Huldbrand, together with rich apparel and veils, that she might select from among them the brightest and most beautiful for her dress in the morning. The attendants rejoiced at this opportunity of pouring forth good wishes and promises of happiness to their young mistress, and failed not to extol the beauty of the bride with the most glowing eloquence. This went on for a long time, until Bertalda at last looking in a mirror, said with a sigh—

"Ah! but do you not see plainly how freckled I am growing? Look here on the side of my neck."

They looked at the place and found the freckles, indeed, as their fair mistress had said; but they called them mere beauty-spots, the faintest touches of the sun, such as would only heighten the whiteness of her delicate complexion. Bertalda shook her head, and still viewed them as a blemish.

"And I could remove them," she said at last, sighing. "But the castle-fountain is covered, from which I formerly used to have that precious water, so purifying to the skin. Oh, had I this evening only a single flask of it!"

"Is that all?" cried an alert waiting-maid, laughing as she glided out of the apartment.

"She will not be so foolish," said Bertalda, well-pleased and surprised, "as to cause the stone cover of the fountain to be taken off this very evening?"

That instant they heard the tread of men already passing along the court-yard, and could see from the window where the officious maiden was leading them directly up to the fountain, and that they carried levers and other instruments on their shoulders.

"It is certainly my will," said Bertalda with a smile, "if it does not take them too long." And pleased with the thought, that a word from her was now sufficient to accomplish what had formerly been refused with a painful reproof, she looked down upon their operations in the bright moonlit castle-court.

The men raised the enormous stone with an effort; someone of the number indeed would occasionally sigh, when he recollected they were destroying the work of their former beloved mistress. Their labour, however, was much lighter than they had expected. It seemed as if some power from within the fountain itself aided them in raising the stone.

"It appears," said the workmen to one another in astonishment, "as if the confined water had become a springing fountain." And the stone rose more and more, and almost without the assistance of the workpeople, rolled slowly down upon the pavement with a hollow sound. But an appearance from the opening of the fountain filled them with awe, as it rose like a white column of water; at first they imagined it really to be a fountain,

until they perceived the rising form to be a pale female, veiled in white. She wept bitterly, raised her hands above her head, wringing them sadly as with slow and solemn step she moved toward the castle. The servants shrank back, and fled from the spring, while the bride, pale and motionless with horror, stood with her maidens at the window. When the figure had now come close beneath their room, it looked up to them sobbing, and Bertalda thought she recognised through the veil the pale features of Undine. But the mourning form passed on, sad, reluctant, and lingering, as if going to the place of execution. Bertalda screamed to her maids to call the knight; not one of them dared to stir from her place; and even the bride herself became again mute, as if trembling at the sound of her own voice.

While they continued standing at the window, motionless as statues, the mysterious wanderer had entered the castle, ascended the well-known stairs, and traversed the well-known halls, in silent tears. Alas, how different had she once passed through these rooms!

The knight had in the meantime dismissed his attendants. Half-undressed and in deep dejection, he was standing before a large mirror, a wax taper burned dimly beside him. At this moment someone tapped at his door very, very softly. Undine had formerly tapped in this way, when she was playing some of her endearing wiles.

"It is all an illusion!" said he to himself. "I must to my nuptial bed."

"You must indeed, but to a cold one!" he heard a voice, choked with sobs, repeat from without; and then he saw in the mirror, that the door of his room was slowly, slowly opened, and the white figure entered, and gently closed it behind her.

"They have opened the spring," said she in a low tone; "and now I am here, and you must die."

He felt, in his failing breath, that this must indeed be; but covering his eyes with his hands, he cried: "Do not in my death-hour, do not make me mad with terror. If that veil conceals hideous features, do not lift it! Take my life, but let me not see you."

"Alas!" replied the pale figure, "will you not then look upon me once more? I am as fair now as when you wooed me on the island!"

"Oh, if it indeed were so," sighed Huldbrand, "and that I might die by a kiss from you!"

"Most willingly, my own love," said she. She threw back her veil; heavenly fair shone forth her pure countenance. Trembling with love and the awe of approaching death, the knight leant towards her. She kissed him with a holy kiss; but she relaxed not her hold, pressing him more closely in her arms, and weeping as if she would weep away her soul. Tears rushed into the knight's eyes, while a thrill both of bliss and agony shot through

his heart, until he at last expired, sinking softly back from her fair arms upon the pillow of his couch a corpse.

"I have wept him to death!" said she to some domestics, who met her in the ante-chamber; and passing through the terrified group, she went slowly out, and disappeared in the fountain.

Father Heilmann had returned to the castle as soon as the death of the lord of Ringstetten was made known in the neighbourhood; and he arrived at the very hour when the monk who had married the unfortunate couple was hurrying from the door, overcome with dismay and horror.

When Father Heilmann was informed of this, he replied, "It is all well; and now come the duties of my office, in which I have no need of an assistant."

He then began to console the bride, now a widow, though with little benefit to her worldly and thoughtless spirit.

The old fisherman, on the other hand, though severely afflicted, was far more resigned to the fate of his son-in-law and daughter; and while Bertalda could not refrain from accusing Undine as a murderess and sorceress, the old man calmly said, "After all, it could not happen otherwise. I see nothing in it but the judgment of God; and no one's heart was more pierced by the death of Huldbrand than she who was obliged to work it, the poor forsaken Undine!"

He then assisted in arranging the funeral solemnities as suited the rank of the deceased. The knight was to be interred in a village churchyard, in whose consecrated ground were the graves of his ancestors; a place which they, as well as himself, had endowed with rich privileges and gifts. His shield and helmet lay upon his coffin, ready to be lowered with it into the grave, for Lord Huldbrand of Ringstetten had died the last of his race. The mourners began their sorrowful march, chanting their melancholy songs beneath the calm unclouded heaven; Father Heilmann preceded the procession, bearing a high crucifix, while the inconsolable Bertalda followed, supported by her aged father.

Then they suddenly saw in the midst of the mourning females in the widow's train, a snow-white figure closely veiled, and wringing its hands in the wild vehemence of sorrow. Those next to whom it moved, seized with a secret dread, started back or on one side; and owing to their movements, the others, next to whom the white stranger now came, were terrified still more, so as to produce confusion in the funeral train. Some of the military escort ventured to address the figure, and attempt to remove it from the procession, but it seemed to vanish from under their hands, and yet was immediately seen advancing again, with slow and solemn step, among the followers of the body. At last, in consequence of the shrinking away of

the attendants, it came close behind Bertalda. It now moved so slowly, that the widow was not aware of its presence, and it walked meekly and humbly behind her undisturbed.

This continued until they came to the churchyard, where the procession formed a circle round the open grave. Then it was that Bertalda perceived her unbidden companion, and, half in anger and half in terror, she commanded her to depart from the knight's place of final rest. But the veiled female, shaking her head with a gentle denial, raised her hands towards Bertalda in lowly supplication, by which she was greatly moved, and could not but remember with tears how Undine had shown such sweetness of spirit on the Danube when she held out to her the coral necklace.

Father Heilmann now motioned with his hand, and gave order for all to observe perfect stillness, that they might breathe a prayer of silent devotion over the body, upon which earth had already been thrown. Bertalda knelt without speaking; and all knelt, even the grave-diggers, who had now finished their work. But when they arose, the white stranger had disappeared. On the spot where she had knelt, a little spring, of silver brightness, was gushing out from the green turf, and it kept swelling and flowing onward with a low murmur, till it almost encircled the mound of the knight's grave; it then continued its course, and emptied itself into a calm lake, which lay by the side of the con-

secrated ground. Even to this day, the inhabitants of the village point out the spring; and hold fast the belief that it is the poor deserted Undine, who in this manner still fondly encircles her beloved in her arms.

ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT

ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT

In the Island of Funen, there lived, in old times, a noble gentleman, called Froda the Skalds'-friend; a title which had been given him, because he not only took delight in hospitably entertaining all famous and honourable singers in his fair Castle, but also laboured, with great industry, in collecting any ancient songs, tales, or traditions, which might still be met with in Runic manuscripts, or otherwise. With this view, he had even made some voyages to Iceland, and, in the course of them, fought several bloody battles with the pirates; as indeed he was, in all points, a bold knightly hero, and vied with his great ancestors not only in the matter of poetry, but also of war. He was still a blooming young man; yet all the other nobles of the Island were accustomed to combine in his counsels and follow his banner; nay, his fame had passed over sea, and was known in the neighbouring Empire of Germany. This also was what he wished; for it would have broken his heart, had he thought that of him no songs would be sung, and no tales told, in after days.

One fine autumn evening, this worthy lord was sitting before his Castle, as he often did at that time of day, both that he might have a free view

on all sides over land and sea; and also that he might invite any passing traveller to come in with him, and taste his hospitality. However, on the present occasion, he took little notice of the sights he was wont to look at; for an old Book, in artful, beautifully painted characters, had just been sent over to him by a learned Icelander, and was now lying on his knee. It was the story of Aslauga, the fair daughter of Sigurd, who at first, concealing her high birth, and in mean apparel, had herded goats for some poor peasants; then, in her gold veil of flowing tresses, had pleased King Ragnar Lodbrog, and at last, as his queenly spouse, had adorned the Danish throne till the end of her days.

The Knight Froda felt within his mind as if the graceful Lady Aslauga were rising in life and bodily presence before him; so that his brave still heart, devoted indeed in knightly service to all women, but hitherto untouched with passion for any individual female, now flamed up in bright love for this fair daughter of Sigurd. "What matters it," thought he, "that she has vanished from the Earth long years ago? She still sees so bright and clear into this heart of mine; and what more would a knight desire? Therefore shall she henceforth, for ever and ever, be my gentle dame, and my helper in fight and song." In this mood, he made some verses on his new mistress, which ran as follows :—

"They ride and they seek with toil and care,
To find a heart's mistress passing fair;
Through tower and through town they ride and seek,
To find a heart's mistress passing meek;
Where rivers are rolling and mountains rise,
To find a heart's mistress passing wise:
Ah, Knights! ye may seek, and seek full long,
'Tis I have found her in Realms of Song!
I've found her, this mistress, wise, fair, and meek;
How hearts can adore, my sword shall speak:
And should I not see her while toiling Here,
O, Yonder, her form is light and clear;
And dwells she not down in Earth, this love,
Our spirits are one in lands Above.
Good-night, thou old World!—Sweet love, 'tis past!
Who seeketh in faith, will find at last."

"Much depends on fortune, too," said a hollow voice, hard by the Knight; and, on looking round, he observed the form of a poor peasant woman, so closely shrouded up in grey-coloured wrappings, that he could not see the smallest portion of her face. She was looking over his shoulder into the Book, and she said, with a deep sigh: "I know this story well; and I myself fare no better than the lady it is written of." Froda looked at her with amazement. "Yes indeed, yes indeed," continued she, with strange becks and nods: "Sure, I am the descendant of the great Rolf, to whom the fairest castles, and forests, and fields, of this Island belonged; thy castle, and thy lands, Froda, among others. And now we are sunk into poverty; and because I am not so fair as Aslauga, there is

nothing can be done for me, and I am fain to hide my poor face altogether." It seemed as if she wept warm tears under her covering. At this Froda was touched, and he begged of her, for Heaven's sake, to let him know how he might help her; he was a descendant, he said, of the great Northland heroes, and perhaps something more than they, a good Christian. "I almost fancy," murmured she beneath her veil, "that thou art the same Froda whom they name the Good and the Skalds'-friend, and of whose mildness and greatness of mind they tell such strange stories. If it is so, I may still find help. Thou hast but to give me the half of thy fields and meadows; I should then be in something like a state to live as beseemeth the descendant of the great Rolf."

Then Froda looked thoughtfully on the ground, both because she had asked so much, and because he was considering whether she could be in truth descended from the mighty Rolf. But after a short pause, the veiled woman said: "I must be mistaken, then, it seems; and thou art not that far-famed, gentle-hearted Froda. Would Froda have thought so long over such a trifle! But I will try the utmost. See, for the fair Aslauga's sake, of whom thou hast been reading, and wert just singing; for the sake of Sigurd's bright daughter, fulfil my petition."

Then Froda started up with a glowing heart, and cried: "Let it be as thou hast said!" and held

out to her his knightly hand, in confirmation. But he could not grasp the fingers of the woman, though her dim shape continued standing close by him. At this, a secret shudder began to creep over his frame, while suddenly a light seemed to issue from the form; a golden light, which covered her as with a dazzling garment; and he felt in his mind as if Aslauga were standing before him, clothed in the waving veil of her gold hair, and looking on him with a kind smile. Transported and blinded, he sank on his knee. On again rising up, he saw nothing but an autumn cloud passing over the meadows, fringed in its outline with the last brightness of twilight, and then disappearing far off among the waves of the sea.

The Knight knew not what to make of this occurrence. In deep reflection, he returned to his apartments; at one time thinking for certain that he had seen Aslauga herself; at another, that some goblin had risen before him with deceitful juggleries, mocking, in spiteful wise, the service which he had vowed to the departed lady. But, thenceforth, whether he was passing over dale, and heath, and forest, or sailing on the sea billows, such-like appearances frequently met him. Once he found a cithern lying in the wood, and scared off a wolf from it; and while the cithern of itself broke forth into sweet tones, a fair baby rose out of it, as of old Aslauga herself had done, when found in a similar manner. At other times, he would see

goats clambering among the cliffs by the shore, and a golden form as if herding them; then again a resplendent queen in a glittering bark would seem to glide past him, and salute him with smiles. And still, when he tried to get near aught of this, it was vapour, and cloud, and air. A poet might sing many songs of these things. So much, however he gathered from it, that the fair dame, Aslauga, had accepted his service, and that he had in deed and in truth become her knight.

During these things, winter had come on, and again passed away. In northern countries, this young season of the year, to those who understand it and know how to love it, is always wont to bring along with it a crowd of most fair and expressive images; with which, if you speak of earthly enjoyment, many a man might content himself for his whole earthly life. But at this time, when the spring came glancing forth with its budding leaves and its streaming brooks, there came likewise from the German Empire a most flowery and sunshiny piece of tidings over to Funen.

On the rich banks of the Mayn, where he pours his flood through the blessed land of Franconia, there stood an almost royal fortress, the orphan heiress of which was a relative of the German Kaiser. She was called Hildegardis, and acknowledged far and wide for the fairest of virgins. Now, her Imperial uncle wished also that she should wed the boldest Knight that could be.

found far and wide, and no other than the boldest. Accordingly, he followed the example of many noble chiefs in such cases, and appointed a Tournament, in which the first prize should be the hand of the lovely Hildegardis, provided that the victor were not already married, or occupied in his heart with some other fair friend. For the lists were not to be shut against any knightly warrior of proper bearing and birth, that the contest of courage and strength to be displayed might be so much the richer. Of all this, Froda's German brethren wrote him full accounts, and he made ready for appearing at the festival.

Before all, he forged for himself a gallant suit of mail, as indeed, among the whole armourers of the North, a region famed on this account, he was the most expert. The helmet he worked of pure gold, and formed it in such a way that it looked on all parts like mere clustering locks, recalling to his mind the golden hair of Aslauga. Thus, also, he fashioned on the breastplate of his harness, which was coated with silver, a gold shape in half-relief, representing Aslauga in her tressy veil; to make it clear to all at the commencement of the Tourney, that this Knight, bearing on his breast the figure of a lady, was fighting not for the hand of the fair Hildegardis, but for the joy of battle and knightly honour.

Then he led his gay Danish horse from its stall, put it carefully on shipboard, and sailed over in safety.

In one of those fair boxwood thickets, which you often see in the kind lands of Germany, he once fell in with a young friendly Knight, of delicate form; who having just, in the gayest manner, spread out his repast on the green sward, under the shadow of pleasant boughs. invited the brave Northman to partake of it. As the two were here dining cheerfully together, they felt a kindness in their hearts towards one another; and rejoiced to observe, on rising, that their present destinations led them both the same road. Not that they had signified this in words; on the contrary, the young Knight, whose name was Edwald, was of an extremely taciturn nature, so that he could sit for hours with a quiet smile on his face, and never once open his mouth. But in this quiet smile itself there came a pious and kindly grace to view; and then, when at times a simple but significant word escaped over his lips, it appeared as a gift deserving thanks. So likewise was it with the little songs, which he now and then chanted. They were almost as soon ended as begun; but in their short lines dwelt a deep graceful life, whether it shaped itself as a friendly sigh, or as a blessed smile. The noble Froda felt as if a younger brother had been riding at his hand, or even a tender blooming son.

In this way they continued several days together; it almost seemed as if their paths were marked out for them in inseparable union; and much as they

rejoiced in this, they used to look at one another, at outsetting, or when cross-ways met, with an air of sadness, as if asking whether there would still appear no diversity in their direction. Nay, it seemed as if in Edwald's downcast eye a tear were gathering.

It happend once, that in their inn, they came upon a rude overbearing Knight; of gigantic form and strong limbs, and foreign un-German speech and manners. He came, it appeared, from Bohemia. This Knight looked over with a strange smile to Froda, who had again spread out the old Book with Aslauga's History before him, and was diligently reading it. "Perhaps you are a clerical Knight?" he inquired of him, and seemed ready furnished to commence a whole train of unseemly jests. But the negative reply came over Froda's lips in so grave and firm a tone, that the foreign Knight on the instant stopped short; as you often see the smaller animals, when they have risked a little liberty with their king the Lion, shrink into peace at a single look from him. Into peace, however, this foreign Knight did not shrink. On the other hand he now began to break jokes on Edwald, on his youth, his silence, and delicate form; all which the latter bore for some time with great patience; but at last when the stranger ventured a too injurious word, he rose up, girt on his sword, and said with a dainty bow: "I thank you, sir, for your wish to give me opportunity of proving that I am no timid or unpractised follower

of knighthood. For in this view alone can your behaviour be excused, which otherwise I should be obliged to call extremely uncivil. Would you please——?"

With this he stept out before the door; the Bohemian followed him with a scornful smile; and Froda, much concerned for his young friend, whose honour was, however, far too precious in his eyes to allow a thought of in any way taking up the cause himself.

It soon appeared that the Northman's anxiety had been groundless. With equal vigour and address, young Edwald fell on his gigantic adversary; so that to look upon the matter, it was almost like those battles between knights and forest monsters, of which we read in old books. The issue, too, was of the same sort. As the Bohemian was collecting all his strength for a decisive stroke, Edwald darted in on him, and with the force of a wrestler cast him to the ground. Then, however, he spared his conquered enemy; courteously helped him up again, and went to seek his horse. In a little, he and Froda left the inn; and their journey once more led them both the same way.

"From henceforth I am glad of this," said Froda, pointing with a look of satisfaction to their common road. "For I must own to thee, Edkin" —he was wont in pleasant confidence to call his young friend by this childlike name—"I must own

to thee, when I thought hitherto, that perhaps thou wert journeying with me to the Tournament in honour of the fair Hildegardis, a certain care rose up over my heart. Thy true knightly spirit I well knew; but I dreaded lest the force in thy tender arms might not suffice it. At length I have come to know thee as a swordsman, that may long seek his match; and Heaven be thanked if our paths go on and on, one way; and welcome to me, by the first chance, to front me in the lists!"

But Edwald looked at him with a sad countenance, and said: "What can my strength and skill avail me, when it is with thee I am to try them, and for the highest prize of life, which only one of us can gain? Ah! this heavy news, that thou also art proceeding to the fair Hildegardis' Tournament, I have long foreboded with sorrowful heart."

"Edkin," answered the smiling Froda, "thou kind gentle child, dost thou not see, then, that I already wear the image of a mistress on my breastplate? My battle is but for the honour of victory, not for thy fair Hildegardis."

"*My* fair Hildegardis!" sighed Edwald. "That she will never be in this world: or if she should—Ah, Froda! it would break thy heart. I know well, the Northland faith is deep-rooted like your rocks, and hard to melt like their snowy tops; but let no son of man believe that he can look unpunished into the fair eyes of Hildegardis. Has not she, the proud, the overproud maiden, so crazed my

still, humble mind, that I have forgotten the chasm which is lying betwixt us, and am hastening after her, and would rather die than renounce the wild hope of gaining this eagle spirit for myself."

"I will help thee, Edkin," answered Froda, still smiling. "Could I but know how this queenly mistress looks! She must resemble the Walkeurs of our Heathen ancestors, I think, since so many gallant heroes yield before her."

Edwald, with a serious air, took a picture from his breastplate, and held it up to him. Fixed, and as if enchanted, Froda gazed upon it; his cheeks glowed, his eyes sparkled; the smile vanished from his face, as sunlight fades away from the meadows before the advancing blackness of the storm.

"Dost thou see now, my lordly comrade," muttered Edwald, "that for one, or perhaps for both of us, the joy of life is gone?"

"Not yet," answered Froda, with a violent effort over his mind; "but hide thy strange picture, and let us rest beneath this shade. The duel must have tired thee a little; and for me an unwonted weariness presses me down with leaden weight."

They dismounted from their horses: and reclined themselves on the sward.

The noble Froda had no purpose of sleeping; he wished without disturbance to begin a stout struggle with himself, and try, if so might be, to drive from his mind the frightfully fair image of Hildegardis. But it was as if the foreign power

had already grown a portion of his own life; and at last a restless dreamy sleep did in fact overshadow his exhausted senses. He fancied himself fighting among a crowd of knights, and Hildegardis was looking on with smiles from a gay balcony; and as he was about gaining the prize, he perceived Edwald moaning in his blood under the hoofs of the horses. Again it seemed to him that he was standing by the side of Hildegardis in a church, and about to be married to her; he knew well that it was not right; and the Yes, which he was to pronounce, he pressed back with resolute force into his heart; and in doing so his eyes were wetted with warm tears. Out of still wilder and more perplexed visions Edwald's voice at length awoke him. He sat up; and his young comrade was saying in a kind tone, directed towards a neighbouring bush: "Come back, however, noble maid. I will surely help you if I can; I did not mean to scare you away; only you were not to interrupt my brother in his sleep." A departing gleam of gold glittered over through the twigs.

"For Heaven's sake, comrade," cried Froda starting to his feet, "whom art thou speaking to, whom didst thou see near me?"

"I know not rightly how it was, myself," said Edwald. "Thou hadst scarcely fallen asleep, when a figure came forward from the wood, wrapped up in deep dark coverings: at first I took her for a peasant woman. She sat down by

thy head, and though I could see nothing of her face I observed that she was in grief, and even saw her weeping. I beckoned to her to remove, and not disturb thee; and was about to offer her a piece of gold, supposing her distress arose from poverty. But suddenly my hand was as it were rendered powerless; and a terror passed through my heart, as if I had conceived such a thought against a queen. At the same time glittering gold locks here and there waved out from among her coverings, and the grove began almost to shine with the reflection of them. 'Poor boy,' said she then, 'thou lovest in thy own breast, and canst figure how a high female soul must burn in keen sadness, when a hero that engaged to be ours, turns away his heart, and is drawn to lower hopes like a weak bondsman.' Thereupon she rose, and disappeared with a sigh in that bush. I almost felt, Froda, as if she named thee."

"Yes, she named me," answered Froda; "and she has not named me in vain. Aslauga! thy knight comes on; he rides into the lists, and for thee and thy renown alone. And in the meanwhile, Edkin, we will win thy proud bride for thee also." With this, full of his old proud joyfulness, he again sprang on horseback; and whenever the magic of Hildegardis' beauty was about to mount up before him, to dazzle and perplex, he gave a smile and cried "Aslauga!" and his inward sun again beamed forth serene and cloudless.

On a balcony in the stately Castle of the Mayn, Hildegardis was accustomed to enjoy the cool of the evening, looking over the rich sweet scene; and with still more pleasure over the gleam of arms, which might generally be seen at the same time on many distant roads, from knights journeying hither, with and without retinue, purposing for the high prize of the Tournament to try their force and courage in it. She was in truth a very proud and high-minded maiden; and perhaps carried matters farther in this respect than even her glancing beauty and princely rank could altogether justify. Now, as she was once looking over the glittering roads with her usual smile, a young damsel of her train began this little song:

Ah, were I but a little bird,
To sing from tree to tree;
And telling no one e'er a word,
Come out so frank and free
With all, O with all that dwelt in me!

Ah, were I but a little flower,
To bloom on grassy lea:
With my sweet perfumes every hour,
Come out so frank and free
With all, O with all that dwelt in me!

Ah, I am but an armed Knight
Bound over land and sea;
Must shut my heart in rest and fight;
And laid in grave shall be
My all, O my all that dwells in me!

"Why do you sing this song, and even now?" said Hildegardis, striving to look very proud and scornful at it, yet a deep secret sadness was visibly enough flitting over her face. "It came into my head I know not how," replied the maid, "as I looked up the road, where the soft Edwald with his dainty little songs first came to us; it was he that taught me this. But seems it not, my mistress, and you, good girls, as if Edwald were riding hither that way again this moment?"—"Dreams!" sneered Hildegardis; and yet for a long while could not lead away her eye from the knight, till at last almost by violence she turned it on Froda, his companion, saying: "Well, yes, that one is Edwald. But what have you to see in that meek humble boy? Here cast your eyes, my maidens, on that other lofty form, if you would see a proper man." She was silent. Through her bosom went a sound as of prophesying, that now the conqueror of the Tournament was riding into the court; and for the first time in her life, in looking at the stately Northman, she felt a submissive, almost painful reverence for a human being.

At supper the two new-come Knights were placed opposite the queenly Hildegardis. As Froda, after the fashion of the North, was sitting in full armour, the golden figure of Aslauga glittered from the silver cuirass full in the eyes of the proud lady. She smiled haughtily, as if she felt that it depended but on her will to drive

the image of that fair one from the breast and the heart of the Knight. But suddenly a clear golden gleam passed through the hall, so that Hildegardis cried: "What keen lightning!" and covered her eyes with her hands. Froda, however, looked with joyful salutation at the bright splendour. Thereby Hildegardis' fear of him grew still deeper; though she thought within herself: "This highest and most mysterious of men was before all others born for her alone." Yet she could not help often looking, almost against her will, with emotion and warmth at the poor Edwald, who was sitting there so silent and kindly, as if he were smiling compassionately on his own sorrow and his own vain hope.

When the two Knights were left alone in their apartment, Edwald still kept looking for a long time from the window into the fresh airy night.

Then he sang to his cithern:

A Hero so true,
A Boy who loved
This hero proved,
They went through the world, these two.

The Hero did win
Him peace and joy;
This saw the Boy,
And had his delight therein.

But Froda took the cithern from his hands, and

said: "No, Edkin, I will teach thee another song. Listen:

The Hall it grows bright as at morning-tide,
The Maiden is come in beauty's pride:
She looks on the right, and then round the left;
No gallant is yet of hope bereft.
He there with the golden cloak will't be?
She glances aside: I think, not he.
Or he with the cunning talk and wise?
She's turning from him her ear and eyes.
Belike 'tis the Prince with the pearls and gold?
Her look on that side is short and cold.
Then who, in the world, let us hear, I pray,
Who is't that the Maid at last will say?
All silent and sorrowing, sits apart
A dainty young Squire; he rules her heart.
They tell many tales to themselves, I wot;
That one, he shall win, and knows it not."

Edwald's heart was glowing within his breast. "As God will," said he, low to himself; "but I think I should never understand how such a thing had come to pass."

"As God will!" repeated Froda. The two friends embraced, and soon after fell cheerfully asleep.

Some days after this, Froda was once sitting in a remote grove of the Castle garden, reading in the ancient Book about his fair mistress Aslauga. Now, it chanced that Hildegardis was passing that way at the time. She stopped thoughtfully, and said:

"How comes it, you strange compound of

Knight and cunning Master, that you keep the rich treasures of your knowledge so much to yourself? I should think you must have many fine stories ready in your mind; for instance, the one you have before you even now: for I see some bright dainty figures of fair virgins and noble heroes painted among the letters."

"In sooth, it is the lordliest and loveliest story this in the whole world," answered Froda. "But ye have no patience, and no seriousness, to listen to our old Northland tales."

"Who told you that?" said Hildegardis, with a little pride, which she liked to assume towards Froda when she could; then seated herself on the stone bench opposite him, and gave order that "he should forthwith read to her somewhat from the Book."

Froda began; and, in the very exertion with which he laboured to translate the old heroic Iceland speech into German, his heart and soul flamed up in more solemn fervour. When he raised his eyes now and then, he looked into Hildegardis' beaming countenance, as for joy and sympathy and admiration, it glanced still fairer and fairer; and thoughts went through his mind, as if she, after all, might be his appointed bride on Earth, to whom Aslauga herself was conducting him.

Then suddenly the characters grew strangely perplexed before his eyes; it was as if the figures were beginning to move, and he was forced to stop.

But, as he was looking with strained sight into the Book, to drive away this wondrous interruption, he heard a well-known, gently-solemn voice, saying: "Make a little room, fair lady. The story which the Knight is reading to you treats of me, and I like to hear it."

Before the eyes of the gazing Froda sat his mistress Aslauga, in the pomp of her golden waving locks, on the bench beside Hildegardis. The maiden, with tears of fright in her eyes sank back in a swoon. Aslauga threatened her Knight, earnestly but kindly, with her fair right hand, and vanished.

"What have I done to you," cried Hildegardis, recovering from her faint by his exertions, "what have I done to you, wicked Knight, that you call your Northern spectres to my side, and with your horrid magic frighten me to death?"

"Dame," answered Froda, "so help me God, I did not call this mysterious lady, who has just appeared to us. But her will I now know full well; and so I recommend you to God's keeping."

With this, he walked thoughtfully out of the grove.

In affright, Hildegardis fled on the other side, from the sombre gloom of the leaves, and stept forth on a fair open green, where Edwald, in the fine glow of twilight, was plucking flowers; and, with friendly smiles, he offered her a nosegay of narcissus and sensitive violets.

The day appointed for the Tournament had now

ASLAUGA APPEARS TO FRODA

arrived; and a great Duke, commissioned as deputy by the Emperor, arranged all things in the lordliest and most splendid fashion for the solemn festival. Large, and level, and beautifully shaped, lay the jousting-ground; strewed with the finest sand, that man and horse might have proper footing on it; and glancing forth almost like a pure field of snow in the middle of the green lea. Rich cloths of silk from Arabia, decorated in curious interlacings with Indian gold, hung many-coloured over the lists enclosing the space, and flowed down from the high scaffoldings erected for ladies and princely spectators. At the upper end, under a canopy of golden arches, tastefully and boldly crossed and combined, was Hildegardis' station. Green garlands and wreaths waved gracefully between the glittering pillars, in the fine July air; and, with impatient eyes, the crowding multitude outside the lists looked up to this, expecting the sight of the fairest maiden in Germany; and only now and then drawn some other way by the stately entrance of men-at-arms, riding gallantly through the barriers. O! how many bright harnesses, and richly-embroidered cloaks of satin, and high-waving plumes, were to be seen there that day! The lordly host, saluting each other and speaking together, swayed this way and that, on the ground within the lists, like a flower-bed stirred by the breath of the air; but a bed where the stalks had grown to trees, and the yellow and white leaves

had bloomed into gold and silver, and the dew-drops had hardened into pearls and diamonds. For whatever was beautiful and precious in the world, these noble gentlemen had tastefully and variedly expended on the glory of that day.

Many eyes were turned on Froda, who, without scarf, or plume, or cloak, with his silver-gleaming cuirass, and Aslauga's golden figure on it, and his well-wrought helmet of golden locks, glittered from amid the crowd like polished brass. Others also there were, that found their enjoyment in looking at young Edwald, who wore a cloak of white satin, fringed with azure and silver, almost covering his whole armour; and a large plume of swan-white feathers, overflowing his whole helmet. To view him, he seemed decorated with almost feminine grace; and yet the rare force with which he managed his wild white steed, announced the victorious strength of this tender hero.

In strange contrast with these two, was a giant shape in armour, dressed in a cloak of black shining bear-skin, trimmed with fine fur, without any ornament of clear metal whatever; even his helmet was overlaid with black bear-skin; and, instead of plumes, a mane of blood-red horse-hair streamed copiously down on all sides from it. Froda and Edwald knew the dark Knight well; it was their uncivil guest in the inn; and he likewise seemed to recognise the two friends; for he whirled his horse abruptly round, pressed through the crowd

of fighters, and, after speaking some time at the lists with an ugly, brass-coloured old woman, sprang over the enclosure with a wild leap, and, darting off like an arrow, vanished out of sight. The old woman nodded after him with a friendly gesture; the multitude laughed, as at a strange Carnival show; and Edwald and Froda had their own almost frightsome thoughts on the matter; which, however, they did not see meet to impart to each other.

The kettledrums rolled, the trumpets sounded: leaning on the old Duke's arm, Hildegardis, richly attired, more resplendent still in all the brightness of her own beauty, stept forward, under the arching of the golden bower, and courtesied to the assembly. The Knights bowed their heads to the ground, and perhaps in every one of their hearts this thought might be beating: "There is no man on Earth that can merit so royal a bride." While Froda bowed, it seemed to him the golden light of Aslauga's tresses glanced over his eye; and his heart was proud and gay, that his mistress held him worthy to be put in mind of her so often.

The Tournament began. At first, the trial was with blunt swords and battle-axes; then man to man, with lances; and, finally, the whole host parted into two equal bodies, and commenced a universal fight, in which it stood with every one to use sword or spear, as he pleased.

Froda and Edwald had alike gained the prize

over their rivals; as each, justly estimating his own and his friend's courageous force, had in some degree anticipated: and now the two were to decide, by a match at running with the lance, to whom the highest crown of victory belonged. Before commencing, they rode slowly into the middle of the course together, and settled where they were to take their places.

"Keep thy inspiring star firmly in thy eye," smiled Froda. "I, too, shall not want the like gracious help."

Edwald looked round with astonishment to see the mistress whom his friend seemed to have in view, and the latter continued:

"I did wrong to conceal aught from thee; but after the jousting, thou shalt know all. For the present, heed not unnecessary thoughts, dear Edkin, and sit firm, firm in thy saddle; for I tell thee I will run with all my force; seeing it is not my own honour only that is at stake, but the far higher honour of my lady."

"In such wise I also purpose to do," said Edwald, kindly. They shook hands, and then rode to their places.

At the pealing of the trumpets, the friends, dashing forward quick as arrows, again met together. Their lances shivered into splinters; the horses staggered; the Knights, unmoved in their stirrups, plucked them up, and rode back to their stations.

When the signal was given for another course, Edwald's white steed snorted, wild and affrighted; Froda's strong chestnut reared into the air. It was clear that the two noble animals both dreaded a second hard encounter; but the Knights held them firm with bit and spur, and, at a new call of the trumpets, they again thundered forward, fierce and obedient. Edwald had, with a deep glowing look, anew impressed his soul with the beauty of his mistress; at the moment of meeting, he cried aloud: "Hildegardis!" and so hard did his lance strike his valiant adversary, that the latter sank back on the haunches of his horse, with difficulty kept his saddle, and scarcely continued stirrup-fast; while Edwald, without wavering, dashed by; lowered his spear in salutation as he passed Hildegardis' bower; and then, amid the loud huzzaing of the multitude, galloped to his place for the third course. Ah! Hildegardis herself had greeted him with blushes and kind looks, in her surprise; and he felt as if the intoxicating bliss of this victory were already won.

Won, however, it was not; for the noble Froda, glowing with warlike shame, was again taming his frighted horse, and chastising it with sharp strokes of his spurs, for the share it had borne in this mischief. At the same time he said, in a low voice: "Dear fair mistress, show thyself visibly to me; it concerns thy name's honour."

To all other persons it seemed as if a rosy

golden summer cloud were flitting over the deep blue sky; but Froda looked into the heavenly face of his mistress; felt himself, as it were, fanned by her golden tresses; and "Aslauga!" cried he, and the Knights rushed together; and far from his horse flew Edwald, down upon the dusty course.

Froda, in knightly fashion, first for a space continued in motionless stillness; as if waiting to see whether any one yet thought of contesting him the victory; and, on his mailed horse, he looked almost like a lofty statue of metal. All around, the people stood silent in abashed astonishment; and as they did break out in the cry of triumph, he beckoned solemnly with his hand, and all were again dumb. Then, with a light bound, he was out of his saddle, and hastened to the place where the fallen Edwald was rising. He pressed him closely to his heart; led his white steed to him, and insisted on holding the stirrup as he mounted. Then he himself again sprang on horseback also, and rode by the side of Edwald to Hildegardis' gold bower; where, with lowered spear and lifted visor, he thus spoke:

"Fairest of all living women, I bring you here Edwald, your knightly bridegroom, before whose lance and sword all the heroes of this Tournament have yielded, I excepted, to whom the lordly jewel of the victory can nowise belong; seeing, as the figure on my cuirass shows, I already serve another mistress."

The Duke was on the point of stepping forward to the two Knights, to conduct them up to the bower; but a sign from Hildegardis restrained him; and she said, with angry, agitated looks:

"Then it seems, my Danish Knight, Sir Froda, you serve your lady ill; for, even now, you have openly called me the fairest of living women."

"This I did," answered Froda, with a courteous bow, "because my fair mistress belongs to the dead."

A slight horror breathed through the multitude at these words, and through Hildegardis' heart; but soon the anger of the virgin again flamed up, and the more, as the lordliest and most wondrous knight whom she knew despised her for the sake of one dead.

"I make known to all," cried she, with solemn earnestness, "that by the just will of my Imperial uncle, this hand can belong to no vanquished man, how noble and renowned soever he may otherwise have appeared. And as the conqueror in this Tournament is bound by service elsewhere, this battle must for me be accounted no battle, and I go hence as I came, a free unaffianced maid."

The Duke seemed desirous of remonstrating; but she turned proudly from him, and left the bower. At this instant, a sharp unexpected gust of air laid hold of the green garlands and wreaths, and threw their ravelled and rustling fes-

toons after her; wherein the people, dissatisfied with her haughtiness, thought they saw a threatening omen; and so, with murmurs of derisive approval, they dispersed.

The two Knights had returned, in deep silence, to their apartments. Arrived there, Edwald had himself disharnessed: he placed all the pieces of his fair bright armour carefully together, with a kind exactness, almost as if he were burying a beloved friend that was dead. Then he beckoned his squires to leave the chamber, took his lute in his arm, and sang this little song to its notes:

"Who's this thou art laying
In grave so still?
My wild, my unstaying,
And froward will.
Sleep soundly, thou will, in thy narrow bed!
My hope sleeps with thee, 'tis cold and dead."

"Thou wilt make me hate thy lute," said Froda: "do now, accustom it to merrier touches. It is far too good for a passing-bell, and thou, in sooth, for such a bellman. I tell thee, my young hero, it will all be right, and as it should be."

Edwald looked in his face with astonishment for a while, then answered kindly: "No, dear Froda, if it offends thee, I will surely not sing again." However, he struck a few tones from the lute, which sounded infinitely tender and loving. Then the Northman, much moved, caught him in his arms, and said: "Dear Edkin, sing, and

speak, and do whatever pleases thee; to me it will always be delightful. But thou mayest believe it well, when I say to thee, with no unaided knowledge, that thy sorrow must end; whether to death or life I yet see not, but great surpassing joy does await thee, for certain." Firm and cheerful Edwald rose from his seat, grasped his companion's arm, and stept out with him, through blooming shrubberies, into the airy coolness of twilight.

At this same hour, an old woman, disguised in much superfluous apparel, was proceeding, under secret guidance, to the fair Hildegardis' chamber. The woman was swarthy, and singular to look upon; by many feats of art she had collected about her a part of the multitude returning from the Tournament, and, in the end, had scared them all asunder in wild horror. Before this last occurrence, Hildegardis' girdle-maid had hastened to her mistress, to entertain her with the strange, merry, conjuring tricks of the old brass-coloured woman; and the ladies of the suite, striving to banish the chagrin of their disconsolate Princess, bade the messenger call in the crone. Hildegardis assented, hoping thereby to divert the attention of her maidens from herself; and so be permitted, with more deep and earnest attention, to watch the varying forms that were flitting in confusion through her mind.

Hildegardis' maid found the place already empty, and the old brass-coloured stranger standing in

the middle of it, laughing immoderately. Being questioned, the woman did not hesitate to tell how she had, in a twinkling, disguised herself in the shape of a huge owl, and in screeching words, informed the spectators that she was the Devil, whereupon every one of them had with loud shrieks run off for home.

The maid felt frightened at the thought of such hateful jesting; yet she durst not go back to ask new orders from her mistress, having already noticed the bad humour she was in. Therefore she satisfied herself with enjoining on the old woman, under many promises and threats, the strictest charges to behave herself with proper discreetness and good manners in the Castle; and then led her in by the most secret paths, that none of those she had just frightened might notice her.

The crone now appeared before Hildegardis; and, in the midst of a deep humble courtesy, nodded to her, in a strange confidential wise, as if the two had been concerned in some mutual secret. The Princess involuntarily shrunk together at this movement; yet, hideous as the old woman's face appeared to her, she could not for a moment turn away her eyes from it. To the rest, the expectations they had placed on the old woman seemed by no means repaid: in truth, she played nothing but the most ordinary tricks, and told stories, known to every one; so that even the girdle-maid

grew wearied and indifferent, and felt no little shame at having recommended her. She accordingly soon glided out unobserved, and several of the maidens followed her example; and still, as any one of them withdrew, the old crone twisted her mouth into a smile, and repeated that hatefully confidential nod. Hildegardis could not understand what attraction it was that she felt to the jests and stories of this brass-coloured woman; but so it was, in her whole life she had never listened to any one with such attention. The crone went on narrating and narrating, and the night was already looking dark through the windows; but the maidens who were still with Hildegardis had all sunk into deep sleep, and forgotten to light tapers in the chamber.

Then, in the sombre hour of dusk, this swart old woman rose from the stool where she had hitherto been sitting, and just as if she now felt at her ease and at home, stept forward to Hildegardis, who was stupefied with horror; sat down beside her on her purple couch, clasped her with odious caresses in her long withered arms, and whispered some words in her ear. The Princess felt as if some one were pronouncing Froda's and Edwald's name, both at once, and the sound of them seemed to change into a melody of flutes; which, clear and silvery as its warblings were, nevertheless lulled her as into a sleep: she could move her limbs indeed, but only to follow the music, which wove, as it

were, a veil of silver network around the hideous form of the crone. And the latter walked from the chambers, and Hildegardis after her, through her sleeping maidens, singing all the way in a low small voice: "Ye maidens, ye maidens, I wander at night."

Outside the Castle was the giant Bohemian, in his bearskin cloak, waiting with squire and groom, all ready mounted. He laid a heavy bag of money on the crone's shoulders, so that she sank, half-whimpering, half-laughing, to the ground; then he lifted the dreaming Hildegardis on his horse, and galloped off with her in silence, into the deepening gloom of the night.

"Ye bold lords and knights, who yesterday contended in honour for the prize of your arms, the fair Hildegardis' hand! Arise! Arise! Saddle your steeds, and away! The fair Hildegardis is stolen!"

So, next morning, in the clear redness of dawn, were many heralds crying through castle and town; and on every side were knights and noble squires dashing forth in clouds of dust, by all the roads, along which, lately in the fair twilight, Hildegardis had, in silent pride, seen her many suitors advancing.

Two, whom you well know, proceeded in inseparable companionship on this occasion, as before; but whether they were on the right track or not, they knew as little as the rest; for how,

HILDEGARDIS' IS CARRIED OFF

and when, the adored mistress could have vanished from her chambers, was still to the whole Court a frightful, inexplicable riddle.

Edwald and Froda had travelled on so long as the sun moved over their heads, unresting as he; and now, when he was sinking in the waves of the river, they thought to gain the race of him, and again spurred their wearied horses; but the noble animals staggered and moaned, and there was nothing for it but to let them feed a little on the grassy sward. Certain of bringing them again at the first call, the knights freed them of curb and snaffle, and sent them off to graze at freedom, and drink in the blue fresh Mayn; they themselves, in the meanwhile, resting under the boughs of a neighbouring alder-tree.

And, deep in the cool dark shades, rose a gleam as of a mild, but clear-glittering light, and checked Froda's utterance, who was, even now, preparing to acquaint his friend of his plighted service to the fair Aslauga; having hitherto been hindered from it, first by Edwald's sadness, and then by his impatience in travelling. Ah! this soft lovely gold light was well known to Froda. "Let us follow it, Edkin," said he, in a low voice; "and let the horses, in the meanwhile, rest and graze." Edwald, without answering, did as his companion advised. An inward voice, half-sweet, half-fearful, seemed to tell him that here was the path to Hildegardis, and the sole path that led to her. Once only he said,

with a tone of surprise: "I never saw the twilight glance so beautifully on the leaves as it is doing now." Froda shook his head and smiled, and they pursued in silence their secret track.

On issuing from the other side of the alder-wood, at the shore of the Mayn, which almost encircled it by a sweeping turn, Edwald saw well that some other brightness than that of twilight was shining on them; for the night already hung in cloudy darkness in the sky, and their guiding beam stopped at the strand of the river. The waves were sufficiently enlightened by it, to expose to view a little woody island in the middle of the stream, and a boat on this side fastened to a stake. But on approaching the spot, the Knights descried new objects: A troop of horsemen, of strange foreign shape, all in deep slumber; and, reclining on cushions in the midst of them, a sleeping female dressed in white.

"Hildegardis!" smiled Edwald to himself, in scarcely audible tones; at the same time he drew his sword, making ready for battle, if so were, the robbers might awaken; and beckoned to Froda to lift the sleeping lady, and bring her to a place of safety. But at that instant, something in the figure of an owl passed whirring over the black squadron; and, with a sudden rattling clang, they all started up, and flew with hideous howling to arms. A tumultuous unequal battle rose in the darkness, for the friendly gleam had vanished. Froda and

Edwald were parted in the press, and could only hear each other's stout war-cry from a far distance. Hildegardis, roused from her enchanted sleep, not knowing whether she was dreaming or awake, fled with bewildered senses, and bitterly weeping, into the deepest shades of the alders.

Froda felt his arm growing weary, and the warm blood running down from two wounds in his shoulder. Therefore he determined so to die, that he might mount up with honour from his bloody grave, to the high mistress whom he served; and throwing his shield backwards, he grasped the handle of his sword with both hands, and rushed with a loud war-shout on the terrified enemy. Immediately he heard some voices crying: "It is the Northland Fury that is coming on him! The battle-madness!" And the host, in affright, darted asunder, and the wearied hero remained in his wounds alone in the darkness.

Then once more Aslauga's gold hair gleamed in the shades of the wood; and Froda, exhausted and leaning on his sword, looked towards it, and said: "I think not that I am yet wounded to death; but when it does come to this, then, O beloved mistress! then, of a surety, thou wilt likewise appear to me in all thy loveliness and splendour?" A low "Yes" came breathing over his cheeks, and the gold light vanished.

But now Hildegardis, almost fainting, staggered forth from the thickets, and said, with a feeble

voice: "Within is the frightfully fair Northland spectre, and without is the battle! O good God! whither shall I turn?"

Then Froda went towards her with soothing gestures, was about to say many comforting words to her, and to ask concerning Edwald, when suddenly the sound of armour, and wild shouts, gave notice that the Bohemian robbers were returning to the charge. Froda hastily conducted the maiden to the boat; pushed it off from the shore; and rowed with the last effort of his strength to reach the woody island which he had before seen in the middle of the river. But the robbers had lit torches; they waved them sparkling this way and that; and by their light discovered the boat, as well as that their dreaded Danish enemy was wounded; and from this, new courage rose in their plundering hearts. Froda, before he reached the island, had heard a Bohemian on the other side coming down with a fresh skiff, then a crowd of the foe getting into it, and beginning to pull after him.

"To the wood, fair virgin!" whispered he, so soon as he had helped Hildegardis ashore. "Hide yourself there, while I try to keep the robbers from landing."

But Hildegardis clung fast to his arm, and whispered in reply: "Did I not see you stained in your blood, and pale? And would you that I die of terror in the solitary clefts of this dark hill?

Ah! and if your Northland gold-haired lady-spirit were to come again, and sit down by me— Or think you I do not see how she shines there through the bushes even now?"

"She shines!" repeated Froda; and new force and hope ran through his veins. He mounted the ascent, following the kind gleam; and though Hildegardis trembled at it, she willingly accompanied her guide; only now and then whispering, in an anxious voice: "Ah, Knight! my high, wondrous Knight! do not leave me alone here! It would be my death!" Soothing her with friendly encouragements, he walked on faster and faster, through the hollows and darkness of the wood: for he already heard the sound of the robbers landing on the shore of the island.

Suddenly he found himself at the mouth of a cave, thickly covered with bushes; and the gleam vanished. "Here, then!" whispered he, endeavouring to hold the branches asunder, that Hildegardis might enter more easily. She paused for a moment, and said:

"If you were to let go the branches again behind me, and I were to be left alone with spectres in the cave!—O Heaven!—But, Froda, no doubt you will follow me, poor, frightened, hunted creature, will you not?"

In this confidence she stepped through the boughs; and Froda, who could have wished to remain as sentry, followed her. With strained ear

he hearkened through the stillness of the night; Hildegardis durst scarcely draw her breath. The clanging of an armed footstep approached; nearer and nearer, close by the mouth of the cave; and Froda endeavoured in vain to get loose of the trembling maiden. The branches at the entrance were crashing and breaking; Froda sighed heavily: "So I must fall here, like a lurking fugitive, with women's veils floating round me! O God! it is a sorry end! But can I cast away from me this half-fainting form, and let her sink upon the dark, hard ground? Perhaps down into an abyss? Well, be then what must be! Thou, Aslauga, my mistress, knowest that I die in honour!"

"Froda! Hildegardis!" said a soft, well-known voice at the entrance of the cavern; and, recognising Edwald, Froda, with glad readiness, carried out the Princess into the starlight: "She is dying in our hands for terror," said he, "in this black chasm. Are the enemy near?"

"Most part of them are lying dead on the shore, or floating in their blood among the waves. Lay aside anxiety, and rest yourselves. Art thou wounded, dear Froda?"

In answer to the questions of his astonished friends, he then briefly related, how, passing in the dark for a Bohemian knight, he had stept into the skiff with the rest; after which, on landing, he had found no difficulty in entirely confounding the robbers; who, seeing themselves attacked from the

middle of their own troop, had imagined that they were bewitched. "At last," thus he ended his narrative, "they set to cutting down each other; and now we have only to wait for morning, to begin our journey home with the Princess. For what of the owl-squadron still flits about, will of itself hide in daylight."

While relating these things, he had been preparing, with great care and daintiness, a bed of twigs and moss for Hildegardis; and the wearied lady having, with some gentle words of thanks, soon fallen asleep, he began to dress his friend's wounds, as well as the darkness would permit.

During this earnest occupation, under the moaning of the high dark trees, with the voice of the river-waves murmuring from a distance, Froda, in a low voice, informed his knightly brother what mistress it was that he served. Edwald listened in deep thought, but at last said:

"Believe me, however, the lofty Princess Aslauga will not be wroth with thee, though thou bind thyself in true love with this earthly fair one. Ah! surely even now thou art shining in the dreams of Hildegardis, thou richly-gifted happy hero! I will not stand in thy way with my foolish wishes: it is clear enough that she can never, never love me. Therefore this very day will I set forth to join the war, which so many bold German knights are waging in the heathen land of Prussia; and the black cross

which makes them priestly warriors, I will lay, as the surest remedy, on my beating heart. And do thou, dear Froda, take the fair hand which thou hast won in knightly battle, and lead a life of happiness and satisfaction without example."

"Edwald," said Froda, in a serious tone, "this is the first time I ever heard a word from thy mouth, which an honest follower of knighthood could not turn to action. Do thou towards the fair haughty Hildegardis according to thy pleasure; but Aslauga remains my mistress, and no other will I serve in life or death."

At this rigorous answer the youth felt as it were rebuked, and was silent; and the two, without further speech, sat watching throughout the night in their own solemn contemplations.

Next morning, scarcely had the sun, bright and smiling, scattered his first radiance over the flowery plains round Hildegardis' Castle, when the watchman blew a merry air on his silver horn; for, with his falcon eyes, he had already from a far distance recognised the Princess, as she came riding along between her two deliverers. And from castle, and town, and hamlet, gay crowds issued forth, hastening to witness the glad arrival.

Hildegardis turned on Edwald her eyes, shining through tears, and said: "Had it not been for you, young hero, all these kind people might have sought long and vainly before finding me in my

distress, and before tracing out the noble Froda, who doubtless must now have been lying dumb and cold, a bloody mangled corpse in the dark cleft of the rocks."

Edwald bowed humbly, but persisted in his usual silence; nay, it seemed as if some unwonted sorrow repressed even the friendly smile, which formerly, in sweet gentleness, came over his face so readily at any word of kindness.

The Duke, Hildegardis' guardian, had, in the great joy of his heart, prepared a sumptuous morning repast, and invited to it all the dames and knights who were still there. Now, as Froda and Edwald were ascending the stair, in shining pomp, close after Hildegardis, the youth said in a half whisper to his friend:

"Thou canst indeed never more love me, thou noble, steadfast hero?" and as Froda looked at him with astonishment he proceeded: "Thus it is when boys take it into their heads to counsel heroes, however well intended it may be. For now I have sinned heavily against thee, and against thy high mistress Aslauga still more."

"Because thou would'st have plucked away every flower in the garden of thy life, to give me pleasure?" said Froda. "No; thou continuest my gentle brother in knighthood now as before, dear Edkin; perhaps thou art grown still dearer to me."

Then Edwald again smiled in still gladness, like a flower after the morning rain in May.

The eyes of Hildegardis glanced on him, mild and kindly; she often spoke with him also, in benignant words and tones; while, on the other hand, since yesternight, a reverent fear seemed to withdraw her from Froda. But Edwald, too, was much altered. With whatever humble joy he accepted the condescending favour of his mistress, it still seemed as if there stood something between the two, which forbade him every, even the most distant, hope of happiness in love.

Now, it chanced that a noble Count, from the Emperor's Court, was announced; who, being then bound on a weighty mission, wished to pay his reverence to the Princess in passing. She received him joyfully; and, directly after the first salutations, looking at her and Edwald, he said: "I know not if my good fortune has guided me to a most pleasant festival? It would be glad news for the Emperor my master."

Hildegardis and Edwald looked very lovely in their embarrassed blushing; and the Count, observing that he had been too hasty, bowed humbly to the young knight, and said: "Pardon me, noble Duke Edwald, my forward way; but I know the wish of my Sovereign, and the hope that this might be already fulfilled made my tongue forget itself."

The eyes of all present fixed inquiringly upon the young hero, who, with graceful embarrassment, thus spoke: "It is true, the Emperor, during my last attendance in his Imperial camp, had the

excessive graciousness to make me a Duke. My good fortune so ordered it, that in one of our actions, some horsemen of the enemy, who had dared to attack the sacred person of our Sovereign, fled away just as I arrived at the spot."

The Count, at Hildegardis' request, circumstantially related this heroic achievement; and it came to light, that Edwald had not only saved the Emperor from the most imminent danger; but likewise, shortly afterwards arranged, and, in the cool daring spirit of a general, victoriously fought, the main battle which decided the war.

Astonishment at first held every one mute; and before the congratulations could begin, Hildegardis turned to Edwald, and said, in a low voice, which, however, in the silence, was heard by all: "The noble Count has expressed the wish of my Imperial uncle; and I now conceal it no longer, my heart's wish is the same. I am Duke Edwald's bride."

With this, she held out to him her fair right hand; and all present waited only for his taking it, to break forth in loud approval. But Edwald did not do as they expected; on the contrary, he sank on his knee before the Princess, saying: "God forbid that the lofty Hildegardis should ever recall a word which she has solemnly spoken before dames and knights. To no vanquished man, you said, could the hand of the Emperor's niece belong; and there stands the noble Danish knight Froda, my conqueror."

Hildegardis turned hastily away with a slight blush, and hid her eyes; and while Edwald rose, it seemed as if a tear ran over his cheek.

Clanging in his armour, Froda stept into the middle of the hall, and exclaimed: "I declare my late victory over Duke Edwald to be pure accident, and again challenge the knightly hero into the lists to-morrow." And so saying, he threw down his iron gauntlet, and it rung on the floor.

But Edwald did not rise to lift it. On the contrary, a deep blush of anger glowed on his cheeks, his eyes glanced indignantly, so that you would scarcely have recognised him for the same person; and after a pause, he said: "Noble knight, Sir Froda, if I erred towards you, we are now even. How could you, a hero gloriously wounded of two sword-cuts, challenge a healthy man to-morrow into the lists, if you did not despise him?"

"Pardon me, Duke," answered Froda, somewhat put to shame, but in all cheerfulness; "I spoke too fast. Not till my complete cure do I challenge you."

Then Edwald joyfully lifted the gauntlet; again knelt down before Hildegardis, who, turning away her face, held him out her fair right hand to kiss; and then, arm-in-arm with his high Danish friend, he walked out of the hall.

While Froda's cure was proceeding, Edwald, impatient till it were completed, went out now and then, while the evening was darkening down deep

and silent over him, and walked on the flowery terrace under Hildegardis' window, singing graceful little dainty songs, which the maidens of the Princess learned from him, and often repeated.

About this time it happened, that one night when the two friends were together, a man who occupied the post of Writer to the old Duke, Hildegardis' guardian, and who reckoned himself a very knowing person, paid them a visit; for the purpose, as he said, of making them an humble proposal.

The short account of the business was this: That as it was impossible for Froda to do any good with victory, he should take his opportunity, in the approaching Tournament, and quietly fall from his horse; in which wise, he might with certainty secure to his companion the hand of the bride, and at the same time gratify the Imperial will, a thing that could not but turn to good profit for himself in many senses.

At this the two friends in the first place laughed very heartily together; then Froda stept up to the Writer, and said, with great seriousness: "Thee, little mannikin, the old Duke, if he knew thy foolish talk, would, in all likelihood, pack out of his service, not once to mention the Imperial will. But there is a proverb you must get by heart:

When knight with knight hath rode to the lists,
The time is gone for talking of jests;
When knight on knight in the course must dash,
No king or kaiser can stay the clash;

And who pokes his nose in their knightly fray,
He has wish'd his nose from that hour good-day.

"And so your servant, worthy sir! And assure yourself that Edwald and I will run at one another in truth of heart, with all the force that is in us."

The Writer vanished from the chamber in no small haste; and it is said that even next morning he looked exceedingly pale.

Soon after this, Froda had recovered; the course was again made ready as before, only that it was encircled by even a greater multitude of people; and, in the freshness of the clear dewy morning, the two heroes rode out solemnly together to the battle.

"Good Edwald," said Froda, in a low voice by the way, "prepare thyself beforehand; for this time, too, the victory will not be thine. On that red shining cloud stands Aslauga."

"May be," replied Edwald, with a still smile; "but, under the wreaths of her gold bower, Hildegardis is already beaming, and to-day is even there before us."

The knights took their places; the trumpets called, the course began; and truly Froda's prediction seemed about to be fulfilled; for as they rushed together, Edwald tottered in his seat, so that he let go the bridle, caught the mane with both hands, and not without great labour recovered his position; while his wild white horse scoured over the ground with ungovernable springs. Hilde-

gardis also seemed to waver at this sight, but the youth at last tamed his steed, and the second course began.

Froda shot along the ground like a thunderbolt; all thought that the Duke's victory was utterly hopeless. But just at the instant of meeting, the bold Danish horse reared on end as if frightened; the rider swayed, his spear went by without hitting, and under Edwald's firm charge, both steed and knight rushed clanging to the ground, and lay there as if stupefied.

Edwald now did as Froda had done a short time before. In knightly wise, he continued for a space motionless on the spot, as if waiting whether any other adversary would dispute the victory with him: then he sprang from his horse, and flew to the help of his prostrated friend.

Eagerly he laboured to draw him from beneath his horse; and, ere long, Froda regained his senses, extricated himself, and also plucked up his steed. Then he raised his visor, and smiled on his conqueror with a face of warm friendliness, though it was somewhat pale. The latter bowed humbly, almost bashfully, and said: "Thou, my hero, thrown! And by me! I understand it not."

"She herself wished it," answered Froda, smiling. "But come now to thy lofty bride."

In loud triumph shouted the people, low bowed the knights and ladies, as the old Duke now advanced with the lovely pair, and at his bidding,

under the wreaths of the gold bower, they fell into each other's arms with soft blushing.

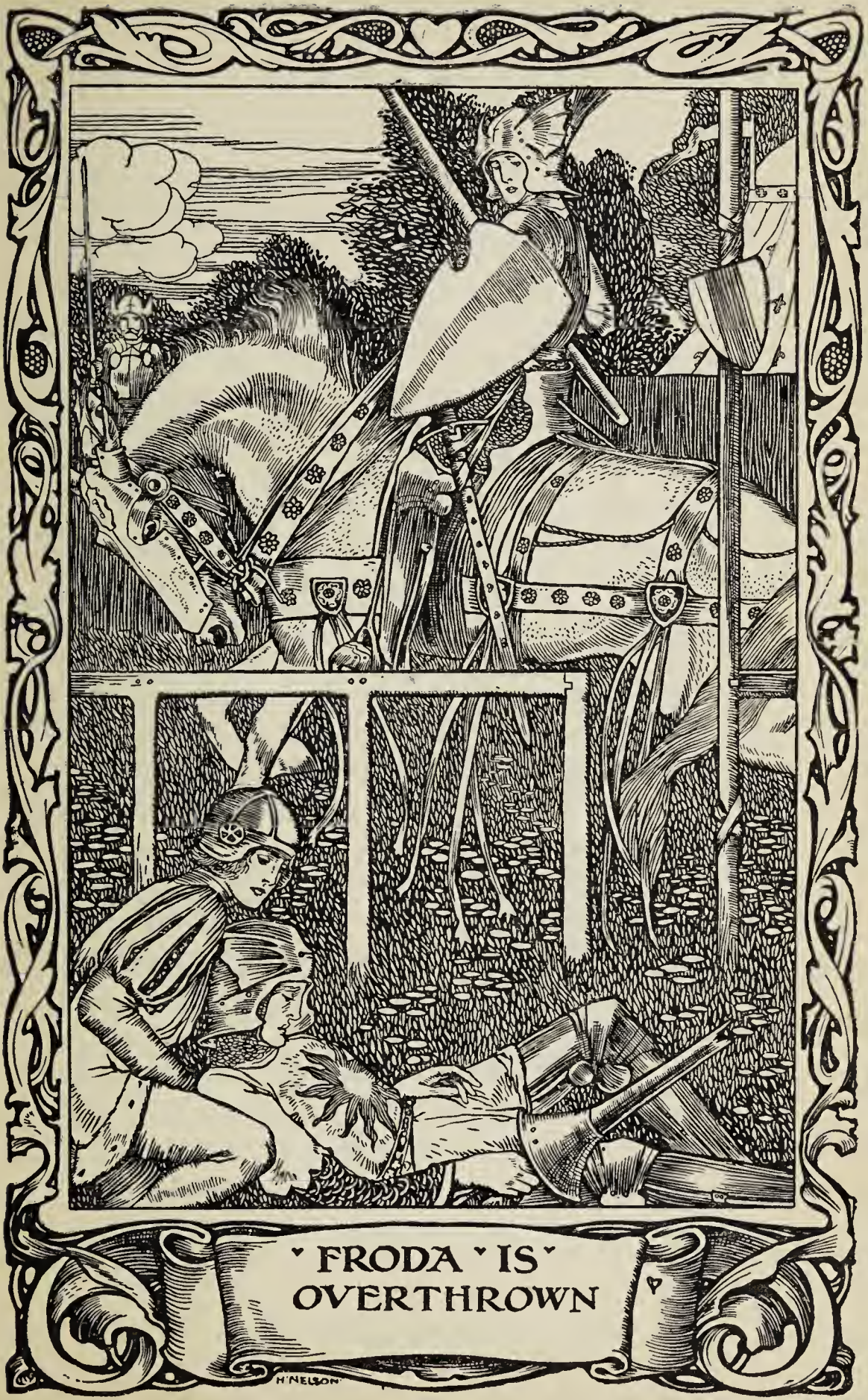
That same day they were solemnly wedded in the chapel of the Castle, seeing Froda had so wished it. A far journey, he said, into another country, was at hand for him; and he could wish so much to be present at the nuptials of his friend before departing.

The tapers were flaming clear in the arched halls of the Castle; Hildegardis had just quitted the arm of her lord, to lead off a dance with the old Duke, when Edwald beckoned to his brother-in-arms, and both walked out into the moonshiny garden.

"Ah! Froda, my high, lordly hero," said Edwald, after some pause; "wert thou but as happy as I! But thy look, earnest and thoughtful, fixes on the ground; or glows impatient skyward. It were unspeakable if thou hadst really borne a secret longing in thy heart for Hildegardis; and I, foolish boy, had now, favoured in so incomprehensible a manner, stept in thy way."

"Be at ease, good Edkin," smiled the Danish hero. "On the word of a knight, my thinking and longing is for another than thy fair Hildegardis. Aslauga's glancing gold figure beams in my heart more bright than ever. But hear what I have to tell thee.

"At the instant when we met in the course—O, had I words to express it!—I was overflowed,



FRODA IS OVERTHROWN

overshone, dazzled, blinded by Aslauga's gold locks, which came waving round me; and my noble horse must have seen them too; for I felt how he reared and started under me. Thee I no longer saw, the world no longer; nothing but Aslauga's angel face close by me, smiling, blooming like a flower in the sea of sunshine which floated round it. My senses failed me; I knew not where I was till thou wert lifting me from beneath the horse; and then, too, in great joy, I saw that it was her own kind will which had struck me to the ground. But a strange exhaustion lay over me, far more than the mere fall could have caused; and I, at the same time, felt as if my mistress must, of a surety, soon send me forth on a far mission. I hastened to my chamber to rest, and immediately a deep sleep fell on me. Then came Aslauga to my dreams, more royally adorned than ever; she entered, sat down by the head of my couch, and said: 'Haste, array thee in all the pomp of thy silver armour, for thou art not a marriage guest only, thou art also the——' And before the word was spoken, she had melted away like a dream; and I felt great haste to fulfil her command, and was rejoiced in heart. But now, even in the middle of the festival, I seem to myself so solitary as I never was before, and cannot cease thinking what the unfinished speech of my mistress could have meant."

"Thou art of far higher soul, Froda, than I,"

said Edwald, after a short silence; "and I cannot soar after thee in thy joys. Tell me, however, has a deep sadness never seized thee, that thou shouldst serve so distant a mistress; alas! a mistress who is almost ever hidden from thee?"

"No, Edwald; not so," answered Froda, with eyes gleaming rapture. "I know still that she despises not my service; nay, there are times when she deigns to show herself before me. O! I am a happy, too happy knight and singer."

"And yet thy silence to-day, thy troubled musing?"

"Not troubled, dear Edkin; but so inward, so deep from the heart, and so strangely unaccountable, withal. But this, too, like everything I feel or encounter, comes all from the words and commands of Aslauga. How can it fail, then, to be something beautiful, and to lead to some high mark?"

A squire, who had hastened after them, gave notice that the ducal bridegroom was staid for in the torch-dance; and Edwald, in returning, desired his friend to take his place in the stately ceremony next to him and Hildegardis. Froda assented, with a friendly nod.

The horns and hautboys were already raising their stately tones: Edwald hastened to offer his hand to his fair bride; and whilst he walked with her to the middle of the gay floor, Froda was requesting of the noble dame nearest him, not heeding further

who she was, to rise with him for the torch-dance; and, on her consent, the two took their place next the married pair.

But what were his feelings when a light began to gleam from his partner, before which the torch in his left hand lost its brightness! Scarcely did he dare, in sweet awe-struck hope, to turn his eyes on the dame; and when at last he did so, his boldest wishes and longings were fulfilled. Adorned in a shining bridal-crown of precious stones, Aslauga, in solemn loveliness, was dancing beside him, and beaming on him from amid the sunny splendour of her gold hair, with enrapturing looks.

The amazed spectators could not turn an eye from the mysterious pair: the hero in his silver mail, with the uplifted torch in his hand, pacing on, earnest and joyful, with measured tread; his mistress beside him, rather floating than stepping, and from her golden locks raying forth such brightness that you might have thought the day was peering in through the night; and where a look could penetrate through all this beamy glory to her face, entrancing heart and sense with the unutterably blissful smile of her eyes and mouth.

Towards the end of the dance, she bent towards Froda, and whispered with a kind, trustful air; and with the last tones of the horns and hautboys, she had disappeared.

No one of the curious onlookers had the courage to question the Northman about his

partner; Hildegardis did not seem to have observed her. But shortly before the end of the festival, Edwald approached his friend, and asked in a whisper: "Was it ——?"—"Yes, dear youth," answered Froda, "thy marriage-dance has been glorified by the presence of the purest beauty that was ever seen in any land. Ah! and if I understood her whisper rightly, thou shalt not any more behold me sighing and languishing on this clayey Earth. But I dare scarcely hope it. Now, good night, dear Edkin, good night. So soon as I may, I will tell thee all."

Light, gay morning dreams were still flitting round Edwald's head; when all at once he thought a clear splendour shone over him. He remembered Aslauga; but it was Froda, whose gold helm of locks was now beaming with a no less sunny brightness than Aslauga's flowing hair. "Ha," thought Edwald in his dream, "how has my beloved brother grown so fair!" And Froda said to him: "I will sing thee somewhat, Edkin; low, quite low that Hildegardis may not awaken. Listen to me:

"She came in her brightness, fair as day,
To where in his sleep her true Knight lay:
She held in her small and light-white hand,
A plaything, a glancing moon-gold band;
She wound it about his hair and her own,
Still singing the while: We two are one!
All round them the world lay poor and dim,
She mounts in her sheen aloft with him:

He stood in a garden sweet and bright,
The Angels do name it: Land of Light."

"So finely thou hast never in thy life sung before," said the dreaming youth.

"That I well believe, Edkin," said Froda, smiling, and vanished.

But Edwald continued dreaming, dreaming; and many other visions passed before him, all of a lovely cast, though he could not recollect them, when far in the morning he opened his smiling eyes. Froda and his mysterious song alone stood clear before his memory. He now saw well that his friend was dead; but he sorrowed not because of it in his mind, feeling, as he did, that the pure heart of the hero and singer could nowhere find its proper joy, save in the Land of Light, in blissful communion with the high spirits of the ancient time. He glided softly from his sleeping Hildegardis, into the chamber of the departed. He was lying on his bed of rest, almost as beautiful as he had looked in the vision; and the gold helmet on his head was entwisted in a wondrous, beaming lock of hair. Then Edwald made a fair shady grave on consecrated ground; summoned the Castle Chaplain, and with his help interred in it his heroic Froda.

As he returned, Hildegardis awoke. Astonished at his look of solemn, humble cheerfulness, she inquired where he had been, and with a smile he answered: "I have been burying the body of my

beloved Froda, who has last night passed away to his gold-haired mistress." Thereupon he told Hildegardis the whole history of Aslauga's Knight; and continued in undisturbed mild joy, though for some time after this, a little stiller than formerly.

He was often to be found sitting at his friend's grave, singing this little song to his cithern:

Aslauga's Knight,
Fair is the dance
Where Angels glance,
And stars do sound the measure!
On earthly fight,
Through change and chance,
To guide us right,
Send down thy light,
Thy heart's undying treasure.

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